

DOCTORAL THESIS

Humour in children's literature, 1800-1840

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Humour in Children's Literature 1800-1840

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for the degree of PhD

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Abstract

By reclaiming a wide range of comic works in key literary genres, my thesis proposes that contrary to prevailing critical discourse, humour was a widespread, intrinsic and valued part of children's literature in the period 1800-1840. Histories of children's literature in this era are inexorably tied to an antithetical configuration of instruction versus amusement. Although in recent criticism this binary has been challenged, the critical discussion of amusing texts remains limited to a narrow canon of works operating in opposition to the moral tale and other instructive texts. My thesis widens the scope for humour in this period by interrogating juvenile works and wider print culture in four under-researched areas: the 'papillonnade' poetry of the first decades of the nineteenth century, the new phenomenon of the juvenile Christmas annuals, chapbooks for children, and drama as related to the child. Such an approach embraces literature that was accessible to children across the social spectrum and accordingly reveals both synergies and tensions in attitudes towards humour and the use of the comic across the class divide. Underpinning my analysis, is a rich heritage of philosophical and historical approaches to laughter that reveal a complex and dialogic relationship between comedy, the child and these wider perspectives. This critical link allows for a nuanced reading of humorous texts that cements the placement of laughter within the history of children's literature and anticipates the later humour of better-known works by Lewis Carroll and Edward Lear in mid-century.

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Introduction

I would say that for much of the time, over the last few hundred years, for various religious, educational, social and intellectual justifications for children's literature, the funny book doesn't fit the bill. It is full of latent danger, full of the potential to be trivial, distracting, pointless, subversive, debasing and dirty. This I suspect is the reason for its neglect as something worth thinking about seriously [...] (par. 8)¹

When Michael Rosen gave his inaugural lecture in July 2014 as Professor of Children's Literature at Goldsmith's College, London, the subject of his speech was 'Humour in Children's Literature'. As a graduate student immersed in this very topic, this lecture was, obviously, of interest, and throughout the paper Rosen makes an eloquent case for a reappraisal of humour in several areas of children's literature. Rosen's primary concern is humour in the personal context of the poet's own childhood reading, but it also touches upon the historical perspective of my own research when Rosen states that this area remains "unexplored territory" (par. 98). Especially important is his contention that humorous books for children throughout history have often been trivialised or subjugated to the many and varied over-arching reasons for "encouraging" and "promoting" children's literature (par. 7). Part of the reason for this is, Rosen states, due to the fact that humour often clashes with prevailing pedagogic and social agendas that frequently privilege the serious over the light-hearted, the highbrow over popular literature, and the conservative over the radical. My own research reveals similar tensions in early nineteenth-century literature for children where humour and play often conflict with Enlightenment aims of a serious and rational education, or where laughter, particularly at the expense of

¹ The text of Rosen's lecture is replicated on the poet's blog and has no pagination thus all references are to paragraphs numbered sequentially.

others, contradicts moral and Christian ideals of respect, charity and decorum. And yet my research also reveals that the picture regarding humour in this era is complex. Romantic writers in particular saw humour (specifically folk humour) as an antidote to Utilitarianism, and the development of ‘good natured’ or ‘amiable’ humour reflected a positive view of human nature derived from the philosophies of John Locke and later, Jean-Jacques Rousseau. This philosophical hinterland surrounding the comic is fully described in section 1.3 and underpins my analysis of humour in early nineteenth-century children’s texts, allowing a contextualised reading of these works. In this regard, my thesis is unique in children’s literature scholarship in addressing such nuances, and is thus situated within the critical void highlighted by Rosen in that it treats humour in children’s literature in the early nineteenth century as “something worth thinking about seriously” (par. 8).

1.1. Theoretical and Critical Positioning

When reviewing histories of children’s literature however, the general reader could be forgiven for thinking that the exact opposite of Rosen’s quotation is true; that humorous texts for children from a historical perspective are generally seen in a positive light and receive due critical attention. After all, some of the canonical works of children’s literature, particularly dating from the nineteenth century, are humorous and entertaining. For example, Edward Lear’s *Book of Nonsense* (1846) is predicated on laughter with a serious undercurrent, whilst the topsy-turvy landscape of Carroll’s *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland* (1865) contains parodies on existing children’s literature and comically ridicules rote learning, ‘proper’ behaviour and decorum. Likewise, the juvenile texts written prior to the publication of Lear’s *Book of*

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Nonsense and which are the focus of this thesis, are also often presented positively by historians and scholars of children's literature. Despite the perceived prevalence of 'serious' moral texts for children in this era, critics tend to privilege more humorous works such as William Roscoe's *The Butterfly's Ball and the Grasshopper's Feast* (1806) or Catherine Ann Dorset's *The Peacock 'At Home'* (1807) as harbingers of a more imaginative and enjoyable era of children's literature after mid-century.

In this respect, Rosen's pessimism regarding humour in children's literature is perhaps misplaced. Focusing on the early nineteenth century, comic texts for a juvenile audience tend to be lauded by critics as bright spots in a sea of bleak morality. Such a narrative adheres to the instruction/amusement binary that has permeated children's literature scholarship since 1932 when F. J. Harvey Darton wrote his pioneering history, *Children's Books in England*, where he outlines a "cheerful bustle" of "short lived" humorous works published by John Harris and others that brought relief from the "general moral movement as expressed in juvenile fiction" (1982, p. 212). What Lissa Paul in *The Children's Book Business* (2011) calls the "profound influence" of "Darton's classification system of instruction and amusement" on subsequent histories of children's literature (p. 60), is to be found in the prevalence of a pugilistic vocabulary where comic texts are pressed into service as the foot-soldiers of a rear-guard action that reflects the cultural dominance in our own time of the figure of the Romantic child - visionary, innocent, imaginative and deserving of an entertaining literature of its own. In Marjorie Moon's checklist on John Harris' Juvenile Library (1976) for example, the author's invaluable work on this publisher is underpinned by Darton's model. In Moon's introduction, the nineteenth century is presented as a "time when the pious Mrs Trimmer and her allies in morality were launching their *strongest attacks* on books of the imagination", but

where John Harris valiantly often “took up his position on the side of the children, and *counter-attacked* with books of entertainment, nonsense and delight” (p. 2 emphasis added). Writing thirteen years later in her authoritative history of early children’s literature, *Engines of Instruction, Mischief and Magic: Children’s Literature in England from Its Beginnings to 1839* (1989), Mary Jackson credits Roscoe’s text and other works principally published by Harris, with “*restrain[ing]*” the “old order” of “duller improving and information books” (p. 208) with “Oberon” leading the “*counter-offensive*” (p. 191 emphasis added). This battle of binary struggle is so well worn that it presents problems for both sides of the equation. As Paul correctly and eloquently notes, instructional texts and the female authors who frequently wrote them have, until recently, been “successfully suppressed” by “the influence of Romanticism, with its preference for fantasy, imagination, and the innocent child” (2011, p. 63). However, what Paul and others do not question is how amusing texts also suffer within this construction. In the majority of histories of children’s literature humorous works are ideologically privileged only in a surface sense as ‘evidence’ for the construction of Darton’s instruction/amusement binary. Moreover, they are frequently positioned as operating within a vacuum of humour, rather than interrogated within what the critic Maria Lypp in ‘On the Origin and Function of Humour in Children’s Literature’ (1995) terms, a “general culture of humor” (p. 189). Whereas scholars such as Mitzi Myers, Lissa Paul and Donelle Ruwe have begun to blur the boundaries between instruction and amusement and reassess the role of many Enlightenment female writers for children², in respect to the humorous and entertaining works emanating from this period, little attention has been

² The work of scholars such as Mitzi Myers, 1995 has sanctioned a reclamation of women’s writing for children in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century that still continues today, notably in the work of Donelle Ruwe, 2014 and Lissa Paul, 2011.

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paid to the exact nature and purpose of humour in children's literature and the role of laughter in the alleged, antithetical realm of 'instruction', therefore my thesis aims to fill this critical void.

Indeed, the role of amusement in early nineteenth-century writing for children remains so bound to Darton's binary narrative that even when a recent history such as *Be Merry and Wise: Origins of Children's Book Publishing in England, 1650-1850* (2006), based on the children's literature collection at the Morgan Library and Museum in New York, finds "the presence of a good deal more 'amusement' in the early nineteenth century, "than many people suspect", the authors still find the "battle between instruction and amusement" in this period, "unassailable" (p. xii). Furthermore, non-specialist children's literature publications can become even more misrepresentative in this regard. In *The Encyclopedia of Romanticism: Culture in Britain, 1780s-1830s* (2010) for example, Susan Naramore Maher's entry on children's literature seems contradictory in terms of the relationship between instruction and amusement. She states that "[...] literature for children written between 1790 and 1830 broke little new ground", continuing, "most writers accepted the emphasis on instruction rather than delight" (p. 86). Yet two pages later Maher observes that "[t]he years following 1803 prov[ed to be] a watershed in the return of fanciful, Gothic and balladic works that excited the imagination, inflamed the sentiments, or provoked comic, at times bawdy humor" (p. 88). Both these texts hint at something more: that laughter might be more prevalent in this period than is currently documented, and that humorous forms were an integral part of children's literature. My thesis sets out to explore these hypotheses and to build on Michael Rosen's call to take humour in children's literature "seriously" (par. 8) by interrogating the writing and reception of humour for children in this era and

establishing its precise role and function within juvenile literary texts and other media. In order to arrive at such a position, my work has involved lengthy archival research on locating and analysing primary sources, and is supported by secondary reading in a variety of different areas. As such, the following section outlines details of the evolution of my work and the critical heritage upon which it draws.

1.2. Aims and Evolution of the Thesis

My work aims to challenge several prevailing notions regarding humour in children's literature. The most important of these is the concept (based again upon Darton's work) that humour for children before Lear and Carroll was limited to a few "short-lived" bursts of cheerfulness (1982, p. 199). My research, on the contrary, reveals an opposing position: humour for children was everywhere. It was in the theatres, in the streets, in drawing rooms, shop windows and in the hands of children from all social classes either in elaborate and expensive works of literature, or in small cheap pamphlets and penny song sheets.³ The moral tale was widespread, but widening out a view of children's literature to encompass a variety of written and visual modes allows for an appreciation of comedy and laughter that troubles the enduring and simplistic narrative regarding juvenile works in the early nineteenth century.

Establishing the prevalence of humour thus generates a process of 'normalisation' of laughter within my thesis. Moreover, through my structural framework of four chapters each dealing with a humour in a different literary format

³ Jackson. 1989, comments on the inadequacies of the written mode to convey the broad range of entertainments in this period: "One thing that comes through poorly in written criticism such as this is the living voice of an age. Generally, in earlier times people sang more [...] from what one can gather, this was true everywhere. Certainly, ballads, broadsides of songs set to well-known tunes, and even songbooks were abundant sellers in eighteenth and nineteenth-century Britain. [...] To be sure, the children chanted their street songs and game songs, many of which were printed in shoddy and superior chapbooks and in anthologies and were thus passed along to this day" (p. 197).

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- poetry, the Annual form, chapbooks and drama - I place the comic within a wider philosophical, social and literary context that negates the usual placement of these works inside a vacuum of humour. Lypp is correct to state that “children’s literature has received important impulses from the general culture of humor throughout history, in particular from folk literature and political satire” (1995, p. 189), thus sharing my conviction that comic texts for children should be treated as integral to the wider picture. In order to interrogate this precept, however, thorough investigation into the role and function of humour and the connection of comic texts to prevailing and past literary and philosophical trends is required. Lypp is one of the few critics who engages fully with humour in the history of children’s literature. Although Alderson and de Marez Oyens, and to a certain extent, Jackson, foreground some humorous works for children, they ultimately adhere to the instruction/amusement binary. Lypp, however, eschews this approach, instead connecting comedic children’s texts with wider philosophical and political trends in humour such as political caricature and incongruity theory. My own work builds on Lypp’s insight in order to illuminate a lost culture of humorous children’s texts.

Lypp also illustrates the intrinsic connection between (rather than opposition of) instruction and amusement which she exemplifies with reference to the tales of Aesop. This link is echoed in texts discussed in my own thesis such as Jane and Ann Taylor’s *A Peep into London for Good Children* (1809), which is a primarily instructional book, yet also notable for the authors’ frequent use of comic irony which foregrounds both a pedagogic and humorous opportunity in the discrepancy between text and authorial intention. Likewise, the seemingly strict moral title of *The Good Boy’s Soliloquy* (1813) belies the fact that the whole work is an extended satire on the moral tale itself, as Brian Alderson points out in *Be Merry and Wise* (2006, p.

152). The analysis of such texts as part of a comic ‘continuum’ allows me to reinstate a dialogic relationship between instruction and amusement that has been partly obscured by the overarching oppositional narrative so influential in children’s literature. Moreover, it also allows for a disciplinary function for humour that in this era was an important factor in the education and socialisation of children and in which children’s literature played an important role. In this regard I have drawn on Michael Billig’s work on comic theory. *Laughter and Ridicule: Towards a Social Critique of Humour* (2005), which asserts that humour is often used to privilege conservative impulses of social control and discipline. This is a theory that serves as a counterpoint to the “subversive” tendencies of humour that Rosen notes in his lecture (par. 8), and which underlines the need to analyse carefully the different functions for humour within juvenile texts of this period. In interrogating these different aspects of the comic, my thesis positions this era not merely as a pre-cursor to a perceived ‘golden age’ in children’s literature after mid-century, but as a crucial period for humorous juvenile works in its own right. In order to achieve the above aims, my work draws on a variety of primary texts from diverse archival sources and is scaffolded by cross-disciplinary secondary reading. The methodological framework that enables this analysis is outlined in the following section.

1.3 Methodology

At this there peal’d a second roar
Of laughter, louder than before.
And WITBOOK, that audacious elf,
Thus chuckling, lectured from his shelf: [...]
Tell me, pedantic, would-be wise
Who all things but yourselves despise,
Why learning which was formed to bless,
Should not be class’d with cheerfulness?

‘Album and Folio’ in *Whims and Oddities for the Young* (1828, p. 137).

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This extract, taken from the anonymously authored children's book *Whims and Oddities for the Young* published in 1828, encapsulates both the methodological process and the underlying philosophy of my thesis. Written by a "warm admirer" (p. vi) of Thomas Hood's *Whims and Oddities*, a work for adults by this comic poet published in 1826, this text illustrates the vital dialogism between literature for adults and children during this era, and it also exemplifies a number of the areas investigated in my research. Written in the comic style of Hood, the poem relates a tragi-comical tale of an argument between books in the library of a well-to-do home. "WITBOOK" (p. 137) is surrounded by works of classical literature: "TASSO, MILTON, BURKE and HUME" (p. 135) as well as the "dry and musty" "FOLIO" (p. 140) and the "child of fashion" the "ALBUM" (p. 139). As befits some of the negative contemporary attitudes towards humour in this period, Witbook's manner is "audacious" and impudent (p. 137), his appearance rough and ready: "No recreant calf-skin wraps my limbs / Or bindings stamp'd with shining gold" (p. 139). But his role is nevertheless important in entertaining his owner when he turns "yawning" (p.138) from books of learning, and like the wise fool, he speaks the blunt truth to the other, seemingly more learned, books. In its humorous evocation of the instruction/amusement binary, 'Album and Folio' serves as a type of metaphor for my own journey of reclamation to find the 'witbook' amongst the more prominent Folios and Quartos - the canonical and better-known works of children's literature. Similarly, in its presentation of the "audacious", pugnacious and generally 'low' status of Witbook, this text both reflects and critiques the often negative attitudes towards humour for a child audience that Rosen outlines in his lecture and which I will trace in the following pages.

The rarity of this book in reality is also evidence of how comic texts for children of this era often lie unexplored in archives or are confined to entries in

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publishers' catalogues. My research is thus predicated on methodical searches of library collections, advertising material within existing works, publishers' lists and literary reviews in contemporary periodicals. Although my work utilises histories of children's literature, such as those by Jackson, Darton, Lehrer and others in order to ascertain the small body of comic juvenile literature already on the academic radar, my thesis is predicated on a more rounded measure of humour in early children's literature. As such I have undertaken detailed work on wider juvenile collections. In this regard the online searchable archives at the Hockcliffe Collection and their introductory essays have proved invaluable in finding and connecting primary sources. The work of Peter and Iona Opie likewise, has provided me with many potential leads for my research. *The Treasures of Childhood* (1989) in particular, which presents aspects of the extensive Opie collection at the Bodleian Library, Oxford has been a helpful reference guide, whilst Alderson and de Marez Oyen's scholarly work based on the children's literature holdings at the Morgan Library, has also proved a valuable resource. In addition, the Henry Lyon collection at the British Library has afforded me the opportunity to derive source material from this small and interesting collection. Serendipity has also played a part, with texts such as *Whims and Oddities for the Young* located only because of an inherent connection with other works - one text often led to another.

An obvious problem with these manual searches, however, is its dependence upon my own judgement in choosing texts to read closely, based (frequently) upon titles in a catalogue alone. Books with 'humour', 'mirth', 'fun', 'laughter' in the title or description have merited closer attention, yet such an approach ran the risk of falling foul of my own argument against the reason/imagination opposition, with humour this time privileged over instruction. My solution was to look as far as possible at

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collections as a whole and/or a wide range of texts with similar generic or thematic links. In this regard, as my research has progressed, I have focused on several areas that have helped ring-fence my work to manageable proportions, whilst still achieving an analysis of humour from a wide variety of different works. *The Christmas Box* (1828), for example, a Christmas annual for children which Darton praises for its “lightness of touch” (p. 212), but which has never been interrogated as a whole, led to a chapter based around this genre. Other areas of investigation have similarly developed from catalysts within primary and secondary reading. In Chapter 5 for example, my work on the toy theatre - itself a subgenre predicated on play, has led to further archival research on pantomime and Punch and Judy and the crossover of plays for adults on the London stage into books for children. Similarly, the trope of the fairground in my chapter on chapbooks has revealed a lively discourse of humour tied to this theme both within primarily humorous texts and in books of a more moral and instructive nature.

These thematic links have developed into chapters based around what I regard as the most significant and under-researched literary formats: verse papillonnades, juvenile Christmas annuals, children’s chapbooks and the dramatic form. These areas were selected because they recover a large amount of comic material from a range of different literary styles. The Christmas annuals, for example, encompass fiction/non-fiction texts, poetry, prose, drama and visual art. Chapbooks, similarly, often incorporate songs and games alongside verse and prose, whilst in my final chapter, I analyse the drama of private performance alongside the remediation of dramatic texts into other forms such as verse literature and the hybrid toy-text-image of the juvenile drama. As such I am able to show the strong presence of humour for children across the literary spectrum.

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In addition, the division and order of my chapters is designed to show that comic texts appealed to a socially diverse children's readership. The first two chapters attend to material written for a primarily affluent juvenile audience drawn from the middle and upper classes, whilst the last two chapters show how comic material was also accessible to children of lesser means and a lower social standing through juvenile chapbooks and drama. The interaction of cheap and expensive print for children is an integral part of my analysis of the influence and reach of comic texts and their reciprocal dialogism. In this interrogation of humour and class dynamics, Andrew O'Malley's work *The Making of the Modern Child* (2003) has provided a useful critical approach. This work is rooted in a Marxist philosophy that interrogates the "material conditions in which children's books were (and continue to be) produced, and the class dynamics at work in the dissemination of children's books in the period" (p. 20). However, O'Malley concentrates his analysis on how middle-class ideology is disseminated through texts, toys and medical literature rather than the more reciprocal relationship between types of humour that is the focus of my own work. In analysing these varied comic forms: folk humour, satire, parody, irony and the philosophical discourses that surround them, my discussion also identifies where class anxiety is often closely associated with the sanction or prohibition of different types of laughter.

Indeed, focusing on humour is an effective way to illuminate the prevailing cultural context. As Sara Lodge (2007) illustrates in her book on Thomas Hood's poetry, drawing humour into critical discourse is a fertile and engaging process that can illustrate the very real role that the comic mode played in the lives of early nineteenth-century children. As Vic Gatrell states in *City of Laughter: Sex and Satire in Eighteenth Century London* (2006), studying the comic "can take us to the heart of

a generation's shifting attitudes, sensibilities and anxieties just as surely as the study of misery, politics, faith or art can" (p. 5). Both these studies, whilst very different and not specifically centred upon children's literature, have nevertheless been useful to my work as models that position humour as a composite of all manner of social, literary and philosophical discussion.

My thesis is also rooted in an appreciation of comic texts as material objects that were written, published, bought, read, enjoyed, rejected and/or loved by 'real' writers, publishers, parents and children. In this regard I follow what Matthew Grenby and Kimberley Reynolds calls a "feedback loop" of text and reader (2011, p. 107), an element that Lissa Paul also foregrounds in her analysis of the children who might have bought and read the books of the publisher Benjamin Tabart⁴. In addition, the innovative work of Grenby in *The Child Reader 1700-1840* (2011) and William St Clair in *The Reading Nation in the Romantic Period* (2004) (the latter in a more general sense) have been valuable in conceptualising the reception of the books I have analysed.

The structuring of my thesis into four subject chapters has also allowed me to link these sections into specific areas of the philosophy of humour that are pertinent to the mode of transmission discussed. In Chapter 2, I begin with an interrogation of what Mary Jackson terms 'papillonades', a group of texts inspired by William Roscoe's *The Butterfly's Ball*, which were published mainly in the first fifteen years of the nineteenth century. Through these texts I interrogate the concept of the social role of humour, wit and satire as a topical feature of nineteenth-century philosophy of the comic mode, and the implications that this has for the uses of humour in relation

⁴ Grenby and Reynolds' discussion of the continuous dialogue of context, text, writer and reader echoes the concept of a 'communication circuit' in Darnton, 2007 where all the composite elements of book production: publishers, authors, readers, printers, bookbinders have a dialogic impact on the work under discussion.

to the developing middle classes. As I have outlined, the main texts of the papillonnade genre often appear in histories of children's literature, however few critics treat these texts as more than a representative form in the perceived move towards humour and imagination. The work of Tess Cosslett (2006) and Donelle Ruwe (2003; 2014) are exceptions to this in that these critics interrogate individual papillonnades to highlight the concept of the carnivalesque, and satiric humour and canonicity respectively. Ruwe's work is particularly persuasive in this regard, however she leaves relatively unexplored the interconnections between papillonnades and wider comic culture/literature of the early nineteenth-century. My chapter addresses both these areas by drawing widely on the work undertaken by Mikhail Bakhtin on the dialogic text in *The Dialogic Imagination* (1975) in order to illustrate the reciprocal nature of children's literature, writing for adults, and the prevailing socio-historic context⁵.

In Chapter 3 my analysis centres on juvenile Christmas annuals and the twin concepts of play and amiable humour that surrounds this festive time of year. Focusing on a middle-class audience, I interrogate how many of the anxieties surrounding humour for children in this period are dissipated through the 'special' circumstances of the Christmas period. My analysis here draws on the only book-length study to address the subject of these annuals: Katherine Harris' *Forget Me Not: The Rise of the British Literary Annual, 1823-1835* (2015). Harris' work is valuable in providing a context for the juvenile annuals against the rise of the equivalent works for adults, though she gives little more than a passing mention to these children's

⁵ *The Dialogic Imagination* is made up of four essays that were first published as a whole in 1974. The individual essays have earlier publication dates, however my work references this complete text edited and translated by Emerson and Holquist (1981).

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texts, assuming the content of these works to be primarily didactic. The texts that I interrogate in Chapter 3 are thus, hitherto unexplored. This chapter also both utilises and critiques Stuart Tave's work *The Amiable Humorist* (1960) in which the author charts a teleological movement of humour from Hobbes' concept of superior laughter, through the discourse of polite amusement in the eighteenth century, towards what this critic terms the 'amiable humorist' mode of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century. In this phase laughter, according to Tave, becomes unifying, positive and 'innocent' - that is, free from malice. The Romantic configurations of Christmas by Leigh Hunt, Charles Lamb and others are a particular fit with this type of philosophic rendering of humour and the figure of the child features prominently in such configurations. Drawing on Bakhtin's work on the concept of carnival in *Rabelais and His World* (1965) as a sanctified period for 'misrule', and utilising Johan Huizinga's theory of play in *Homo Ludens* (1938), I interrogate how Tave's concept of 'amiability' and the Romantic constructions of the child within a specific narrative of Christmas, are both reflected and rejected within the humorous contributions to the juvenile annuals.

In Chapter 4 my analysis turns to chapbooks and specifically the children's chapbooks that developed in the early nineteenth century. Here I have drawn on work by Dianne Dugaw (1995), Barry McKay (2003) and Matthew Grenby (2007) amongst others, to enable me to understand the history and transmission of this particular form of literature. Grenby is one of the few scholars to interrogate how children might have read chapbooks and how chapbooks relate to the evolution of children's literature. However, Grenby's work does not interrogate the specificities of the new type of 'children's chapbooks' prevalent from the 1820s. Thus my approach is to meld Grenby's placement of chapbooks in the evolution of children's literature with a

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specific analysis of thematically linked texts. These include works relating to the story of Dame Trot, and the locus of the fairground. By utilising Bakhtin's work on dialogism alongside Bolter and Grusin's *Remediation: Understanding New Media* (2000), which describes how new media can reformulate older textual and visual forms, I am able to highlight both the common themes and the intrinsic differences between the humour in cheaper children's texts (chapbooks) and more expensive children's books produced by firms such as Darton and Harris, as well as related themes in literature with a primarily adult audience. From a philosophical perspective, my analysis in this section specifically interrogates the place of folk humour within wider considerations of laughter, and highlights some of the tensions within a Romantic reclamation of what William Hazlitt terms the "wayward humours" and "lively impulses" of the "English Common People" (1825, pp.16-17). In this respect the work of Vic Gatrell and Simon Dickie in *Cruelty and Laughter* (2011), have been useful adjacent studies which have helped me to conceptualise the often "chasmic discrepancies" between philosophical discourse, "polite anxieties" regarding humour, and popular culture (Gatrell, 2006, p. 176).

Chapter 5 concludes the main body of the thesis with an analysis of comic texts that are related to dramatic performance both on stage, at home and in the streets. From a philosophical perspective, I continue to interrogate elements of folk humour within the pantomimic mode and puppet theatre. Additionally, the visual nature of drama has enabled me to analyse aspects of the comic grotesque as it relates to children's literature and to wider considerations of the grotesque in this period. In this regard Bakhtin's *Rabelais and His World* is again a key text, as is Wolfgang Kayser's *The Grottesque in Art and Literature* (1966). I also interrogate the propensity for physical humour on the stage, particularly slapstick and farce, in order to discuss a

type of laughter that is often subsumed in philosophical terms to more textual and cerebral forms of humour. In this respect Louise Peacock's *Slapstick and Comic Performance: Comedy and Pain* (2014), although not connected with children's literature, has provided a useful theoretical framework for my analysis.

Scholarship relating to drama and the child in this period is particularly scarce and generally concentrates upon the figure of the child actor on the nineteenth-century stage⁶. George Speaight's work on puppet theatre and on the juvenile toy theatre (1969; 1999) is the only in-depth engagement with this type of performance, although others have used his work in their own scholarship⁷. Although Speaight's painstaking listings of holdings relating to the juvenile theatre and his careful research on the origins of this area and that of the puppet theatre have been helpful in terms of locating and studying these productions, his work follows a bibliographic and historical model that leaves little room for the sort of interpretative discourse at the heart of my study. In light of the paucity of scholarship in this area I have found some related studies on the theatre to be methodologically valuable. Jane Moody's *Illegitimate Theatre in London, 1770-1840* (2000) for example, contains particularly useful insights into the theatre of this period. However, despite an involved analysis of the 'puerile' qualities of pantomime humour, it does not specifically interrogate the relationship of children with this dramatic form. Her work, along with other studies of pantomime such as David Mayer's *Harlequin in His Element* (1970) and Andrew McConnell Scott's *The Pantomime Life of Joseph Grimaldi* (2010), have been useful in understanding and interpreting the satirical and physical comedy present in this mode. Contemporary explorations such as Charles Dickens' *Memoirs of Grimaldi*

⁶ See for example, Davis, 2006 and Gubar 2008. Varty, 2008 concentrates on child actors in the later nineteenth century

⁷ See for example Reid-Walsh, 2006

(1838) have also yielded a helpful nineteenth-century perspective.

In my analysis of pantomime, which again illustrates the pervasive nature of humour across the social strata, I also use aspects of audience response theory to analyse how humour can divest power to the watching child. In this respect Merle Tonnies' essay 'Laughter in Nineteenth Century British Theatre' (2002) has been useful in providing a framework for my own analysis of extra-textual material - reviews, diary entries, images - in establishing a reader and audience reception to the humorous mode. Such elements highlight widespread tensions between freedom and control and between play and education that illustrate the vital importance of humour to children's literature.

Spanning all my chapters is an analysis of visual humour as represented in illustrations, toy theatre plates and on the stage. This visual aspect often complements the textual humour of a work and adds to its appeal to a child audience. In addition, there are several occasions when my analysis reveals synergies between visual humour in works for children and wider comic/satirical print culture aimed at a more mature market. Here Brian Maidment's approach in *Comedy Culture and the Social Order* (2013) of 'reclaiming' the "'graphic bric-a-brac'" (p. 3) of the early nineteenth century and analysing it in conjunction within a "comic discourse" of "pleasure-giving" (p. 39), is the equivalent in visual print culture of my approach to children's comic texts. However, although Maidment's work is valuable to my study, he does not engage with the illustration of children's literature. Indeed, Maidment himself acknowledges this gap in *Reading Popular Prints* (1996), where he offers Jackson's *Engine of Instruction, Mischief and Magic* as further reading to illustrate "an area of interest not discussed in this study". He goes on to state that "historians of children's literature" frequently make use of the "decorative potential of their sources to support

their own texts [but] they seldom analyse or even notice the nature of the[se] images” (p. 176). My thesis gives illustrations a much higher critical status as the conveyors of humorous effects.

Underpinning the discussion of texts in my thesis are the diverse and often oppositional philosophical considerations of humour that were at work in the nineteenth century and which heavily influenced some of the key literary figures of the period. Drawing on this rich mix of philosophy and literature has enabled me to place my corpus of texts in the midst of nineteenth-century preoccupations about the social and cultural role of humour. In order to present this philosophical background to laughter, the final section of my introduction now outlines a brief history of the key components of this philosophy of humour as it relates to children and children’s literature.

1.4. Philosophy and Humour in the Early Nineteenth Century

Risibility, considered as one of the characters that distinguish man from the inferior animals, and as an instrument of harmless, and even of profitable recreation, to every age, condition, and capacity of human creatures, must be allowed to be not unworthy of the philosopher’s notice

James Beattie. “An Essay on Laughter and Ludicrous Composition” (1764, pp. 323-4)

My thesis draws on a wide range of philosophical theories relating to laughter and the comic mode from ancient to modern times, however, I have rooted my analysis in philosophies of humour broadly contemporary with the long eighteenth century.

Alongside figures such as Frances Hutcheson, Immanuel Kant and Arthur Schopenhauer, I have also utilised works by writers in the early nineteenth century who are influenced by such philosophers and who contribute to debate about humour

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in this period. Samuel Taylor Coleridge, for example, draws heavily on German scholars such as Jean Paul Richter. In the former's lecture; 'On the Distinctions of the Witty, the Droll, the Odd and the Humorous; the Nature and Constituents of Humour' (1818), Coleridge extrapolates the differences between wit and humour by dint of incongruity theory, and assigns an important role to laughter using Jean Paul's concept of the "romantic comic" or the "inverted sublime" from the latter's *Vorschule der Aesthetik* (1804) (2009, p. 174). Here, although Coleridge obscures the potential for nihilism present in Jean Paul's account, humour is afforded great power in its ability to unify humankind. Likewise, William Hazlitt, in the introduction to his *Lectures On The English Comic Writers* (1819) and in other works, comments extensively on the difference between wit and humour and on the way in which folk humour is used in the nineteenth century, whilst Catherine Ann Dorset's poem 'On Wit' (1804) extemporises a view of amiable humour and the dangers of malicious laughter that is particularly pertinent to my discussion. The fact that Dorset also wrote several of the works for children explored in Chapter 2 brings together comic text and philosophy in the dialogic manner suggested above, and brings to the fore a hitherto unexplored dimension to these works.

The overall relationship between humour and philosophy is complex and slippery. On the one hand laughter is, according to William Hazlitt, the trait that elevates humankind above the other animals. As he states in *Lectures On The English Comic Writers*, "[m]an is the only animal that laughs and weeps; for he is the only animal that is struck with the difference between what things are, and what they ought to be" (1845, p. 212). And yet, on the other hand, comedy is often a marginal theme within philosophical discourse. It is not until the eighteenth century that laughter becomes a prominent part of contemporary philosophical debate. In *City of Laughter*,

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Gatrell explores the anxious narratives generated in this period concerning “how, whether, when, and at what one might laugh” (2006, p. 160). These issues prompted works such as James Beattie’s extended attempt at defining the comic in ‘An Essay on Laughter and Ludicrous Composition’ (1764), part of a wider philosophical tome. Since many texts in this period also drew on the approaches to laughter in classical philosophy, I will begin with a brief summary of the longer tradition.

The ancient philosophers such as Plato and Aristotle, often focused on a negative sense of the comic revolving around humour as cruel, superior and dangerous. Plato views humour as having the potential to be uncontrolled, that is, to override rationality and thus become perilous for the rational person. As such, in his *Republic* (380 BC), Plato states that comedy would be carefully moderated to circumvent such concerns (1982, par. 389 a & b). Such a philosophy permeates eighteenth-century thinking and is still very much present in the nineteenth. In *Lord Chesterfield’s Letters* (1737. First pub. 1774) Philip Stanhope (Lord Chesterfield) warns his son against laughing out loud as it will mark him out as lacking intellectual capacity, and position him on the same level as the common people:

Frequent and loud laughter is the characteristic of folly and ill manners: it is the manner in which the mob express their silly joy at silly things; and they call it being merry. In my mind there is nothing so illiberal, and so ill-bred, as audible laughter (2008, p. 72).

Although himself frequently ridiculed and challenged for his views particularly in the later eighteenth and early nineteenth-century period⁸, the vestige of this envisioning of the vulgarity of humour can clearly be seen in the often-vitriolic attacks on pantomime discussed in Chapter 5. With the Romantic movement, however, came an oppositional view of the laughter of the common people with writers such as William

⁸ See Tave, 1960, pp. 82-3 for a discussion of Chesterfield’s view of humour and his later reception

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Hazlitt designating folk humour as a symbol of England's tolerance and freedom in his essay 'Merry England' (1825). Yet even in these more positive incarnations of laughter, the connection made in Hazlitt's work and that of others between children and plebian culture and both these groups and 'low' forms of humour often problematises Romantic writing about the comic. In addition, the status of the child as pre-rational or, in Enlightenment terms as a child being educated into rationality, makes laughter for children even more dangerous in this sense than for adults. These tensions permeate my exploration of humour in this thesis and are especially relevant to my discussion of children's chapbooks and the theatre.

In the nineteenth century, children are also often implicated in another Platonic criticism: that ridicule is evil. In *Philebus* (c. 350 BC) the philosopher states, "the ridiculous [...] is a kind of vice" (1993, par. 48c). In this configuration of humour, ridicule hardens the heart, makes one person superior to another and ultimately is a sin. This is particularly a concern in Christian terms and is a frequent worry of writers such as Ann and Jane Taylor⁹. It is also at the heart of an article that I utilise in Chapter 2 entitled 'The Literature of the Nursery' in *The London Magazine* (1820). Here the author states that "[t]he love of ridicule leads most directly to heartlessness", going on to describe "derision" as "that deadener of every noble and virtuous principle: that pity-killer in the human breast" (p. 481). This concept of derision, of ridiculing - the so-called 'superiority theory' of humour, is a view that is foregrounded in *Leviathan* (1651), the work of the seventeenth-century philosopher Thomas Hobbes. This concept is linked with a negative appraisal of human nature where self-interest is paramount and amusement is derived only from assuming a superior position over others. Hobbes calls this the realisation of "sudden glory" in a

⁹ For a discussion of the Taylor's non-conformist views and how they relate to satire see Dyer, 1997, p. 146

situation (2012, p. 43) and this was a view that prevailed until the eighteenth century when philosophers such as Frances Hutcheson and later David Beattie pointed out the shortcomings in Hobbes' theory in terms of its explanation of laughter.

As Billig emphasises in *Laughter and Ridicule*, this alternative view of humour could not have come about if it were not for a changing socio-political landscape after the Glorious Revolution in 1688, where the absolute status of the ruling elite was weakened in favour of a more democratic, self-governing agenda. The ramification of such political events is evident in works from philosophers such as John Locke whose view of humour nature and development was entirely democratic and innately connected with the development of the child: the child's mind is a blank paper upon which his future can be written without dependence on hereditary privilege. Locke casts humankind as individuals with a faculty of reason that is able to curb the baser elements of human nature, rather than as self-interested beings. Frances Hutcheson's essay, *Reflections Upon Laughter* (1750) emphasises this more benevolent view, and challenges Hobbesian self-interest as the root of humour by proffering an explanation that laughter is very often the product of a discrepancy between words and/or images and their usual context rather than superiority above others. In this, the beginnings of a so-called 'incongruity' theory of humour, where there is a mismatch between object, sense and context, lies a more positive view of the human subject who laughs at the day-to-day idiocies and foibles of life and not only when he has the upper hand.

In the eighteenth century the culture of the coffee house brought a social aspect to wit and humour that would be continued into the nineteenth-century culture of the periodical and other writing communities. Emphasising laughter as a social activity was to further distance humour from the self-interested position of superiority

theory and root it firmly in serious literary context. Through the work of Joseph Addison and Richard Steele, writers and other society figures attempted to reconcile some of the contradictory elements of humour discussed above. As Billig terms it, “the path to gentlemanly wit lay between over-asceticism and hedonism. It should lead neither to the pleasures of the uncouth masses nor to those of the idle aristocracy [...] Being witty in the appropriate manner was a serious matter.” (2005, p. 60).

What the nineteenth century brought to the discussion of laughter was the mode of ‘amiable humour’ discussed by Stuart Tave. In charting the rise of the “benevolent virtues of ‘good nature’ and ‘good humour’” and the role they play in a move towards “cheerfulness and innocent mirth” over “raillery, satire and ridicule” (1960, p. viii), Tave identifies the beginning of the nineteenth century as a key juncture in this movement. Although not perhaps as straightforwardly teleological in nature as Tave implies, the early 1800s did see a foregrounding of positive, unifying and ‘natural’ humour over comic modes that relied upon artificiality, ridicule and harsh criticism. “Even wit” writes William Hazlitt “is only agreeable as it is sheathed in good humour” (1839, p. 164). For children, too this rejection of ridicule and “‘ill-natured’ wit” (Tave, 1960, p. viii) was particularly marked and became linked with a strong Christian ethic to ‘love thy neighbour’ rather than laugh at them. Ann and Jane Taylor advocate just this doctrine when they advise their child readers in *A Peep into London for Good Children* “not to stay and laugh at the misfortunes of [their] neighbours” (1809, p. 108), a sentiment echoed in the children’s annual *The Christmas Box* for 1829 where a young girl is deemed “ungracious” for laughing at her brother’s, albeit comical and affected speech (p. 152). Dickie’s study on ridicule (2011) however, contradicts this concept of sensibility and politeness by illustrating how handicap, misfortune and poverty were often the catalyst for cruel (Hobbesian)

humour.

Despite widespread engagement in literary and philosophical circles with the purpose and the genesis of humour. Enlightenment thinking based on the concept of rationality, coupled with a focus on work and education particularly within the burgeoning middle classes, was often suspicious of the comic. Notwithstanding the continuing influence of John Locke's pedagogic philosophy, particularly in regard to his assertion that amusement could be an aid to learning, the humorous mode was frequently considered 'non-productive', with a surfeit of laughter demonstrating a lack of self-control that contradicted concepts of a rational mind¹⁰. In addition, within the socio-political background to the period with England and France almost constantly at war and the threat of a French invasion and fears of Jacobinism haunting the establishment, humour was a double-edged sword. Often used to dissipate and discharge the threat to the status quo, as was the case in many of the English anti-Napoleonic caricatures produced in this period; equally, laughter and frivolity particularly when practised by the aristocracy, was viewed with suspicion, as a cipher of a non-functioning society. As a result, humour in this period becomes a site of tension, and texts written in the comic mode often display contradictory ideological and philosophical tendencies.

Some of these contradictions can be apprehended through a brief glance at other key philosophers. For example, the (albeit limited) engagement with humour of Immanuel Kant's *A Critique of Judgement* (1790), places the comic on a similar plane to other components of sociability such as music or conversation, in that it can elicit pleasure, yet Kant delves no further in his vision of the purpose of humour. As such, he leaves relatively unexplored humour manifested in the higher intellectual forms of

¹⁰ See for example, Lodge, 2007, especially Chapter 5: 'Pun and Pleasure', where Lodge discusses attitudes towards punning as a 'non-productive' activity and a sign of mental disturbance

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the comic such as satire and wit, and he also expunges entirely the low forms of humour - slapstick, farce, the grotesque - from his discussion. Laughter for Kant serves only the social function of a pleasant pastime. Missing any real intellectual substance, Kant's exposition of incongruous humour thus moves towards the anodyne and platitudinous version of amiable humour that I discuss in relation to the Christmas annuals in Chapter 3. Such a presentation is explicitly pitched against the more mixed mode of amiable humour with its "angular points and grotesque qualities" that William Hazlitt advocates in 'Merry England' (1825, p. 21). In this text Hazlitt praises the "wayward humours of the English Common people" with the elements of rusticity and barbarism that he says "seems necessary to the perfection of humour" (p. 21). These elements of folk humour that I discuss in Chapters 4 and 5, also include the physical comedy of clowning and buffoonery that most philosophical accounts dismiss as anti-intellectual, but which are an important part of the humour of performance that I analyse in relation to pantomime and puppet theatre. Here the elements of violent humour and the grotesque can be deemed diametrically opposed to Kant's designation of laughter as polite pleasure, and yet these forms of comedy also feature in early nineteenth-century literature for children. In analysing this contradiction in Chapter 5, I draw on Bakhtin's valorisation of the carnivalesque body discussed in *Rabelais and his World* (1965). A key concept in Bakhtin's theory of carnival is the importance of humour as a release from work and care, and this aspect has also been a useful bridge to the tendency of many Romantic era writers to use humour and play as antidote to Enlightenment pedagogy and improvement.

These varied and often conflicting approaches to humour thus combine to form the philosophical background to my thesis. "Wit is one of the most dangerous talents you can possess", states Dr John Gregory in his text *A Father's Legacy to his*

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Daughters (1761) (1808, p. 35), whilst in *Elements of the Philosophy of the Human Mind* (1792), the Scottish philosopher, Dugold Stewart allows for a more positive reading of wit, deeming it a “feat or trick of intellectual dexterity” (1822, p. 151). Such contradictions emphasise the complexity of the discourse surrounding humour and laughter in this period, highlighting the necessity of taking humour ‘seriously’. As will become evident in the following pages, philosophical and social discourses surrounding humour often counsel young people in regard to laughter and moreover, use the figure of the child as a symbol of a particular type of humour. Whether caught up in anti-authoritarian discourse surrounding play and pleasure, in supposed need of protection from the deleterious effects of laughter, or as a cipher for innocent humour, this largely unexplored relationship between humour, literature and the child is at the heart of the following study.

Waltzing Cranes and Card-Playing Toucans: The Humorous World of the Papillonades

In 1807 the children's bookseller, John Harris, published a work written by the politician, writer and activist William Roscoe. It was aimed at a juvenile audience and entitled *The Butterfly's Ball and the Grasshopper's Feast*. Written in verse, this poem tells the story of a magical feast in the forest to which a group of children join animals and birds, the "tenants of the air", for an "evening's entertainment" (1808, p. 3)¹¹. Watched by the children, a snail offers to dance "a minuet" (p. 10), whilst a feast is laid out on a "water dock leaf" on a mushroom table (p. 7). This "spontaneous [...]" effusion of a man of real genius", as a review in *The British Critic* terms it (1807, p. 554), was not only exceptionally popular in this early nineteenth-century period, but remains one of the few texts from this era to have transitioned into our own time¹². In histories of children's literature, it is frequently heralded as the first taste of fantasy and humour to enter the juvenile market, and this and the works that followed, are often lauded as the first steps towards an imaginative turn in children's literature that culminates in the 'golden age' of Lewis Carroll and George MacDonald in mid-century (Hunt, 1994. pp. 49-59). As I have noted in my introduction, this linear narrative is problematic and has in recent years been complicated by more nuanced readings, however the journey of my thesis begins with these humorous gatherings of animals and birds due to the fact that these texts are published at a critical point in time regarding humour in literature for children. In her chapter on children's texts and the comic mode, Maria Lypp links humour based on incongruity as opposed to superiority with the rise of fantastic literature for children because, as she explains, "surprising transformations" between "different forms" "inspire" the reader's

¹¹ All references are to the 1808 edition unless otherwise stated

¹² For a full publishing history of *The Butterfly's Ball* from 1806 to the present day see Ruwe, 2014, pp. 171-4

imagination” (1995, p. 183) thus prompting both active thought and mental dexterity (Stewart, 1792, p. 151). Yet, despite the fact that the works that I will introduce in this chapter are now firmly positioned in histories of children’s literature, perversely, very little scholarship exists which focuses on the humour of these essentially comic texts. Rather, these publications are often glossed with empty epithets such as “cheerful good fun of a simple kind” (Darton, 1982, p. 201) or “playful” (Richardson, 1990, p. 125). With a few notable exceptions, which I will discuss below, most critical studies of these “papillonnades”, as Mary Jackson terms them (1989, p. 209)¹³, either present these texts as an homogeneous group that represent a short-lived comic ‘fad’ but that portended the arrival of mid-century fantasy, or, as in the work of Andrew O’Malley, interrogate an individual work as an example of a specific ideology¹⁴. Neither of these approaches attend to the complexities of these papillonnades themselves or, importantly, to the way in which these works interact intertextually to form a kind of ‘living commentary’ for children on many social and political considerations.

My objective in this chapter is thus to reappraise these papillonnades in the context in which they were written, with specific reference to the way in which the humour at the heart of these texts often reveals competing contemporary attitudes relating to the child, wider societal concerns and the role of laughter itself. To facilitate this aim I will draw on Bakhtin’s theory of ‘dialogism’ in *The Dialogic Imagination* and in ‘The Problem of Speech Genres’ (1952-3) that explores the way in which texts are both a product of their environment and simultaneously feedback and affect that same environment¹⁵. At the centre of this scholar’s concept of dialogism is

¹³ Throughout my thesis I will make use of Jackson’s term “papillonnades” when referring to these texts. I also use “butterflies” as an interchangeable term

¹⁴ See O’Malley, 2003, p. 133 ff

¹⁵ This text, although written in the early 1950s was not published in Russian until 1979. The English

the idea of an ‘audience’ (“the utterance has both an author [...] and an addressee” (1986, p. 95)). In these papillonnades there are many complex interactions between the authors and their audience as well as between the texts themselves and the characters within these works that embody Bakhtin’s concept of a dynamic exchange. Such interaction has the effect of creating a kinetic space through which, often competing, ideologies can be glimpsed and within which the child reader is asked to interpret such complexities as part of the reading experience of these interlinked texts. My argument thus repositions the papillonnades within what Lypp describes as a “general culture of humor” (p. 189) for both children and adults where these texts both draw from literary precedents for humour (such as the mock-heroic, Aesopian traditions and Horatian/Juvenalian/Menippean satire) and concurrently refashion humour within their contemporary milieu. In so doing the papillonnades become not comic-text-as-anomaly, but comic text as an integral and understood part of early nineteenth-century literary and popular culture, with a vital role within children’s literature.

In addition to being deeply connected with each other, these papillonnades are also diverse in their underlying ideological position, their interpretation of the butterfly theme and in the use and function of the humour that they employ. Historically speaking they also stand at a juncture where not only was the concept of incongruous humour now firmly imbedded in the discourse surrounding the comic, but additionally the rise of amiable humour set off a chain of debates relating to different aspects of laughter. Wit was considered somewhat passé – an example of contrived, cold comedy predicated on artificiality: word play, and clever jokes – “the

edition I have used (Emerson and Holquist, 1986) combines this essay with other later works by Bakhtin. All further references are to this edition

eloquence of indifference” as Hazlitt terms it (1845, p. 14). It was also often designated cruel and divisive and it stood in opposition to the perceived warmth of positive, amiable humour that embraced the oddities of the human race and united them in their faults. In opening my discussion with an analysis of Catherine Ann Dorset’s poem *The Peacock ‘At Home’* alongside the first papillonnade, William Roscoe’s *The Butterfly’s Ball and the Grasshopper’s Feast* and a work that appeared in the same year, *The Elephant’s Ball* (1807), my analysis highlights the tensions between so-called ‘natural’ humour and ‘artificial’ wit and the wider narratives that surrounded these concepts. Dorset’s poem ‘On Wit’ which appeared alongside a reprint of *The Peacock ‘At Home’* in 1809 underscores what Dorset calls the “deceptive” and “unprofitable” nature of wit in this era, tempered with its ability to “seduce[]” and “infatuate[]”, and thus brings this discussion firmly into the realm of children’s literature (1809, p. 99). Moreover, when Dorset writes of the “keen sarcasm and the quick retort” of wit, its “playful malice - that can wound in sport”, (1809, p. 99), she also partakes of contemporary discussion regarding the nature and purpose of satiric humour. Thus my analysis also links this wider topical debate with the contrast between the social, ‘smiling’ satire of *The Peacock ‘At Home’* and the later, *The Modern Minerva* (1810), and harsher, Juvenalian satire to be found in an intriguing text from John Harris’ children’s list, *The Council of Dogs* (1808) alongside the mixed satirical mode of *The Eagle’s Masque* (1808).

Such tensions in the very humorous foundation of these texts also reflect anxieties and concerns in wider society. Published as the majority of the papillonnades were in a time of war, revolution and rapid domestic change, humour is often used in these texts both to reinforce a conservative and nationalistic agenda and to discharge threat and fear, but also on occasions to challenge the status quo.

Furthermore, the influences of both the Romantic movement and Enlightenment thinking regarding the child are felt particularly in my discussion of the way in which all these papillonnades texts formulate an informed and active child reader. A reader who is challenged by the “higher-order” discourse of satirical humour in particular to infer and interpret meaning within these influential texts (Simpson, 2003, p.3).

The Papillonnades

The popularity of Roscoe’s *The Butterfly’s Ball* was quickly apprehended by its publisher, John Harris who seized the opportunity to capitalise upon this success by commissioning another piece in a similar vein. The resulting work, *The Peacock ‘At Home’*, first published anonymously, but later revealed to have been written by Catherine Ann Dorset, takes the glimpses of humour present in Roscoe’s text to a much more sustained and complex level. In her work, Dorset creates the main character “Sir Argus” as an “indignant” peacock, “enrag’d beyond measure” to think that the “mean little insects” have been involved with the type of grand event portrayed in *The Butterfly’s Ball*, and thus he sets about inviting guests to his own “rout” (1807, p. 5). The frantic preparations for the ball are described in detail, including who is invited and who is not and the reasons for accepting or declining the invitation. Finally, the feast and dancing are minutely observed through a witty social satire penned in jaunty anapaests that races through several hundred lines of poetry. The illustrations by William Mulready complete the appeal of the book (Fig. 2.1).

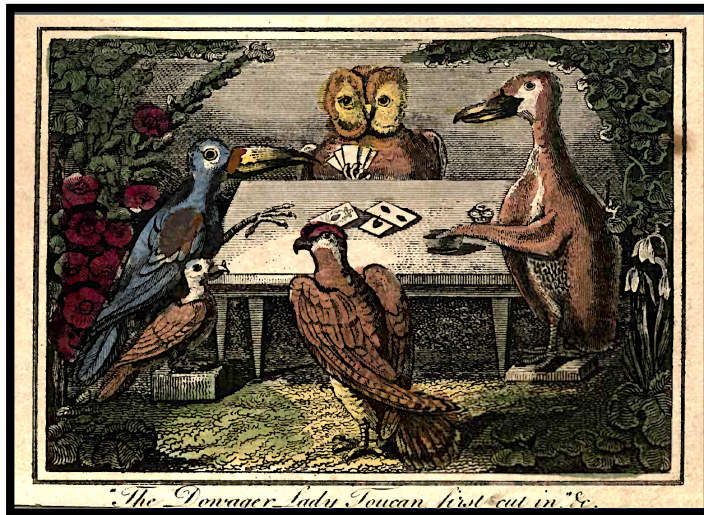


Fig. 2.1. [Mulready, William.] Plate from *The Peacock 'At Home'* Catherine Ann Dorset. London: John Harris, 1807. Facing p. 12

Dorset's poem opened the floodgates and publishers' catalogues show that Harris alone published more than 10 works on his juvenile list inspired by *The Butterfly's Ball* and *The Peacock 'At Home'* during 1807/8. Other publishers also perceived the commercial opportunity in this sub-genre and Benjamin Tabart, the Dartons, and Didier and Tebbett, amongst others, published many papillonnades on their lists. All these texts take the theme of a gathering of birds (*The Jackdaw 'At Home'*, 1808), insects (*The Congress of Crowned Heads*, 1808), animals (*The Lion's Masquerade*, 1807) / *The Lioness's Rout*, 1808), fishes (*The Feast of the Fishes*, 1808), even flowers (*Pomona's Frolic*, 1810), and use this formula to explore the events that take place at such parties. In most cases the process of inviting guests is discussed, as is the feast itself and other activities based around the party such as dancing, singing and playing cards. The vast majority of these texts are intertextual and make reference to Dorset, Roscoe or both, either by name (in preface or text), or by a central character making reference to the peacock's "rout" or the butterfly's "ball" as the catalyst for their own event. The influence of the papillonnades was sustained throughout the

period interrogated by my thesis and indeed later versions written in this vein appeared as late as 1875¹⁶. The popularity of Roscoe and Dorset's works in this era should therefore not be underestimated. According to the publisher, they sold more than 40,000 copies between them in 1807 alone¹⁷. This is a large number for a children's book, and even allowing for potential 'puffery' from Harris the number of editions printed of these two works is in itself proof of their enormous popularity. In fact, Dorset's poem appears to have become even more well-known than its ur-text, going through 26 editions before 1810 and prompting the same reviewer in *The British Critic* to praise the work as a "specimen of playful wit conducted by genius, judgement and taste", whilst remarking that "seldom, very seldom, does it happen, as in the present instance, that the first inventor is surpassed by any imitator" (1807, p. 554).

The popularity of early papillonnades also prompted the remediation of these works into plays, songs, games and toys, and other cheaper textual versions. For example, *The Butterfly's Ball* became a drama performed at the Adelphi Theatre in London in November 1833. Modestly titled *The Butterfly's Ball, or, The Love of the Plants; An Operatic Extravaganza*, and written by Colonel Henry Robert Addison, this adaptation retains only a semblance of Roscoe's book. Specifically, the moth becomes a "jealous moth" pitched against the Butterfly as the latter organises his nuptials with Queen Rose. Interestingly, the theme of jealousy and in fighting has more in common with Dorset's text than with Roscoe's. It seems that the concept of a ball or party was often used merely as a catalyst for further remediation of these stories, with the popularity of the butterflies helpful in securing audiences in other

¹⁶ For example, *The Lion's Reception*, 1875

¹⁷ This figure is drawn from an adverting 'puff' on the outside back cover of an 1809 edition of *The Butterfly's Birthday* by William Roscoe held in the British Library. As such its status as a sales ploy indicates this figure should be approached with caution

media¹⁸. The influence of the papillonnades then, permeates several different areas investigated in my thesis, and it is also important to note that many of the publishers who partook of this phenomenon also published texts that I discuss elsewhere. The presence of the papillonnades is never far away, and this initial chapter investigates a web of humour that, I contend, was an important part of early nineteenth-century literary culture for children.

These butterfly tales were, however, aimed squarely at an affluent juvenile audience. Most of these texts are beautifully illustrated and neatly printed and bound. Although small in size they were relatively expensive in price at about one-shilling plain and one shilling six pence coloured. Thus as Marjorie Moon states in her check-list of Harris' books, the publisher's clientele mainly consisted of "well-to-do families" (1976, p. 5). Working-class children were unlikely to access these texts in their original form, although a chapbook of *The Butterfly's Ball* published by John Catnach around 1820 that faithfully follows Roscoe's text, does indicate a residual presence for the papillonnades in cheaper literature¹⁹. This affluent demographic has important implications for the subject matter and for the function and mode of humour employed in these works. As I will illustrate, the satirisation of the behaviour of the upper classes in *The Peacock 'At Home'* and other texts was particularly resonant for a burgeoning middle class. As Andrew O'Malley states in the introductory section of his book *The Making of the Modern Child*, the late eighteenth

¹⁸ Early in its history, *The Butterfly's Ball* was set to music by the composer George Thomas Smart in a musical arrangement written for George III's three daughters, it was also the subject of other dramatic remediations later in the century when it was twinned with the story of Cinderella in a pantomime at Drury Lane in 1875 and at Crystal Palace in 1876. See the Robbins Library digital project. By 1835 *The Peacock at Home* had also been turned into a children's board game, an example of which is in the Osborne Collection in Toronto.

¹⁹ J. L. Marks also published a text entitled *The Butterfly's Ball and the Grasshopper's Feast* as well as one called *The Butterfly's Court Day and the Chinese Queen's Rout and Ball*. Both these texts completely rework Roscoe's text.

and early nineteenth century saw a large number of children's books published that warned their "middle-class readers against emulation of the elite", and which "attack[ed] the vices engendered by overindulgence and luxury" (2003, p. 3). Many of these papillonnade works fall into this category with their open ridicule of the vacuous social world of the upper classes. This seems to align with O'Malley's theory that this criticism is evidence of an "oppositional middle-class ideology" (p. 3). However other papillonnades texts privilege a retention of the status quo and the class system instead of presenting an opposition to it. These differing functions for humour, from conservative to more radical, form a key part of my discussion in this chapter.

In terms of this satiric humour in particular, my following analysis is grounded in Robert C. Elliott's definition of this form in an entry for the *Encyclopedia Britannica*. Here Elliott defines satire as where "human or individual vices, follies and shortcomings are held up to censure by means of ridicule, derision, burlesque, irony, parody, caricature, or other methods" (2016, par. 1). In other words, for a literary text, image or performance to be satirical, the work must always have an object of attack - be that an individual or a more generalised group or convention. As such, satire may appear to belong to a Hobbesian mode of humour rather than to the more positive rendering of the comic under incongruity theory that Lypp states is so influentially connected with children's literature at this juncture. However, as Paul Simpson states in his linguistic study of satire, what he terms the "aggressive", attack-orientated function of this form is only part of the equation (2003, p. 3). For satire to be effective, he notes, it must also make some attempt at the unification of its readers under a common agreement of the validity of the author's views (p.3). As I shall discuss in my analysis, these seemingly contradictory aspects of satire mean that this

mode often has an uncomfortable relationship with the tenets of amiable humour, and can be particularly problematic in relation to children. Moreover, as John Dryden notes in *A Discourse Concerning the Original and Progress of Satire* (1693), this form need not necessarily contain humour at all: such writing can be tragic as well as comic. Indeed, many satiric texts, particularly those written in the manner of the Roman poet Juvenal often (though not always) are less “attuned to the comic” (Dyer, 1997, p. 39). Those texts written in the manner of the Roman lyric poet Horace, conversely, frequently aim “at laughter or amusement, its poetic speaker being presented as mild, amicable, almost conciliatory” (1997, p. 39). Such texts make frequent use of irony as a way in which to soften the acerbity of the censure. My following analysis, in accordance with the nature of my thesis, naturally focuses on humorous satire. However, my work also acknowledges these classical stylistic differences within the satiric mode and the implications of these for the child reader.

Butterflies and Birds: whimsy versus comedy.

As I established in my introduction. *The Butterfly’s Ball* and *The Peacock ‘At Home’*, thanks to Dorset’s preface, are intertextually linked both for a contemporary audience and for readers of later periods. Thematically and textually this link is evident, but in terms of their use of incongruity humour the two texts are widely different.

Incongruity in order to produce laughter requires the yoking together of two seemingly unrelated objects within the same concept. James Beattie in his highly influential text, ‘An Essay on Laughter and Ludicrous Composition’ (1764), attempts a detailed theorising of incongruity humour that begins with the following catch-all

definition:

Laughter arises from the view of two or more inconsistent, unsuitable, or incongruous parts or circumstances, considered as united in one complex object or assemblage, or as acquiring a sort of mutual reaction from the peculiar manner in which the mind takes notice of them. (1764, p. 3 47)²⁰.

Thus in Roscoe's text the snail taking "steps most majestic" and then promising to dance "a Minuet" (1807, p. 5), creates an incongruous coupling of the image of a human grandly advancing to the dance floor with the ponderous and awkward movements of a snail, ill-equipped for any form of dancing. In the 1807 edition by Harris, this is the only section in which humour has a bearing on the narrative. In the 1808 edition, Roscoe adds more detail that further expands the link between human and animal with the spider resembling an "acrobat", showing "his dexterity on the tight line" (1808, p. 8). The spider becomes a "poor harlequin" character who almost falls from the high wire. However, the natural ability of the spider on the wire/web makes this image more one of congruity rather than incongruity and thus the humorous effect is limited. Indeed, the difference in illustrations between the 1807 first edition of the work and the 1808 reissue further emphasises this move towards the creation of a naturalistic world in *The Butterfly's Ball* rather than one in which the child reader is encouraged to draw parallels between the animal and human sphere (Figs. 2.2 & 2.3).

²⁰ Beattie's work was one of the most popular and influential treatises of laughter in the eighteenth century. It went through five editions in three years and was used as the basis of the section on 'Laughter' in the *Encyclopedia Britannica* until 1842 (see Gatrell, 2006, p. 169)



Fig. 2.2 [Mulready, William]. Plate from *The Butterfly's Ball and the Grasshopper's Feast*. William Roscoe. London: John Harris, 1807.

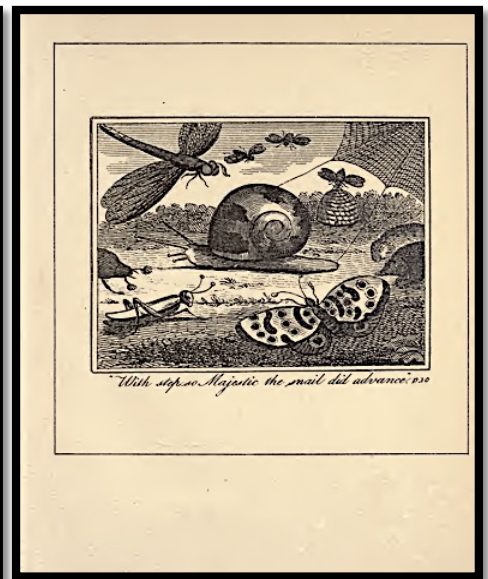


Fig. 2.3. [Anon.] Plate from *The Butterfly's Ball and the Grasshopper's Feast*. William Roscoe. London: John Harris, 1808

The 1807 plates depict humans dressing up as animals and thus highlight the potential for comic interchangeability between the species with the possibility of satiric comment, as well as evoking a children's game of 'let's pretend'. Here the depiction of this ludic quality not only allies Roscoe's work with fun and laughter, but it also foregrounds artifice and display over innate naturalness. Furthermore, the figure of the child appears here at the heart of the work, as an active participant within it, even though the text concentrates on the animal's feast with the children as on-lookers. In 1808, however the figure of the child disappears from the plates and thus remains only in textual sense through the narrative frame of little Robert. The focus is now on the animals in a naturalistic setting with no hint of artifice. Time has obscured the reasons behind this change in illustrators, however, the different images do influence the bias of the text away from incongruity humour and towards an imaginative, fantastical and enjoyable work, but one that actually contains very little self-conscious humour.

These naturalistic elements within Roscoe's work are what Donelle Ruwe argues makes this text desirable and transferable beyond its own era. Ruwe's hypothesis states that because *The Butterfly's Ball* is "inward-looking, simple, and it presents childhood as an enclosed special time", it conforms thus to "Romantic ideology's insistence on innocence and an inherently non-satirical child" (2014, p. 178). Ruwe goes on to stress that because it accords with this Romantic configuration, *The Butterfly's Ball* has thus entered the canon of children's literature above other more satirical (and therefore less 'innocent') papillonnades such as Dorset's *The Peacock 'At Home'*. Indeed, it is true that a reviewer in *The British Critic* in 1807 emphasises these 'natural' and whimsical qualities of this text by commenting that Roscoe's work is "spontaneous", noting its "native beauties" and its "infantine phrases" that thus infers suitability for a child audience (p. 554). Ruwe's argument seems thus compelling, and yet her overriding desire to express this narrative of canonicity means that whilst she critiques several of the papillonnades, including *The Butterfly's Ball* and *The Peacock 'At Home'*, her analysis omits nuanced engagement with the use of humour and the complexity of the comic within these texts and within the wider debate regarding laughter for children in this period.

Catherine Ann Dorset on the other hand, was extremely attuned to the power and attraction of comic writing for children and the corresponding issues that the humorous mode might entail. In *The Peacock 'At Home'*, the incongruous nature of a peacock giving a party, like a snail dancing a minuet, is ludicrous and so has the potential to produce laughter. But what distances it from Roscoe's work is the extent to which Dorset develops the incongruous comparison. This is not just a snail dancing; here we find Toucans playing cards, Storks and Cranes waltzing and Greenfinches flirting with Siskins... What this extended uniting of incongruous

elements achieves is to enable Dorset to draw the reader's attention to a vision of strangeness, artificiality and pretension that in turn creates a critical space for satire. This is an aspect hinted at by the 1807 illustrations to Roscoe's text, but generally is absent from this work. Dorset's text utilises the same 'speech-genre' as *The Butterfly's Ball*, however the child reader is placed not in the 'natural', spontaneous landscape depicted by Roscoe, but in what Ruwe terms "society only slightly disguised as nature" (2003, p. 130). In *The Peacock 'At Home'*, then, the antics of the birds mimic human behaviour so closely that Dorset guides the reader to confront an implied comparison between the peacock's rout and similar activities in the human sphere. The preparations undertaken by the birds for the party for example, which *The British Critic* review finds 'superlative', accurately mirrors comparable events in the human realm:

Such ruffling of feathers such pruning of coats
Such chirping, such whistling, such clearing of throats
Such polishing of bills, and such oiling of pinions!
Had never been known in the biped dominions. (1807, p. 6)

In 1770, for example, Fanny Burney wrote a diary entry detailing the build-up to a masquerade ball. In it she emphasises the excited anticipation of the event, "Hetty had for three months thought of nothing but the masquerade - and no more had I. She had long fixed upon her dress [...] It is really true that all Monday we passed in *preparationing* for the evening [...]" (1889, p. 64 original emphasis). In Dorset's text the present participles of the active verbs reflect this "*preparationing*", giving a sense of immediacy and urgency of action. This impression is further intensified by the repetition of "such" which builds activity upon activity in order to mimic the lengthy and frantic planning.

However, the element of social critique of these activities present in Dorset's

text reflects the condemnation of the frivolous lifestyles of aristocratic society by the middle classes in this turn of century period. So widespread was this condemnation that Samuel Pickering observes in *Moral Instruction and Fiction for Children* (1993) that, “at the end of the eighteenth century, social critics almost routinely blamed the aristocracy for undermining the morality of the middle classes, arguing that the upper classes set poor standards for emulation by living in a luxurious and lazy fashion” (p. 40). This attitude was widely interpolated into books for children (Pickering p. 35-41). Ann and Jane Taylor’s ironic presentation of the posturing of the rich and aristocratic in *Peeps into London for Good Children* is a typical example:

Bond-street is now the most elegant and fashionable place for trade, of any at the west end of town [...] of course, all the gay folk are attracted to this tempting spot; and every morning they parade the street in crowds, or roll about in their carriages. Some people might think it a waste of time, to spend half the day in walking up and down a street, a looking in at shop windows; but for those who are neither disposed to read or work, or walk in the country, or visit the poor, or do any useful thing, Bond-Street, must be a very convenient place. (1803, pp. 32-33)

Taylor’s description stresses exactly the non-productive and potentially corrupting attitude to leisure discussed in my introduction and above. The Taylor’s ironic mode requires the reader to decode and decipher the authors’ intentions in order to appreciate their censure - “irony typically likes to conceal itself” as Zoja Pavlovskis-Petit states (2011, p. 511). Dorset’s satire is however more directly stated and would have had considerable resonance for the child reader through mild caricatures such as the ‘young buck’/ “BANTAM” who is “censur’d” by the older birds “for strutting and crowing, / In those vile pantaloons, which he fancied look’d knowing” (p. 13). Indeed, the satire is made even more explicit in places through telling remarks by the same characters who “Look’d on, and remark’d, that the prudent and sage, / Were quite overlook’d in this frivolous age” (p. 13). Not even these “Birds past their

prime” escape censure with “Lady MACKAW and her Friend COCKATOO” satirised as snobbish, ‘old maid’ gossips whom “in their youthful days, [...] ne’er witness’d such frisking, / And how wrong! in the GREENFINCH to flirt with the SISKIN” (p. 13). Thus the inherently judgemental nature of the haut ton is itself an object of Dorset’s satire. However, the satiric intent is softened by the feminine (half) rhyme of “frisking” and “SISKIN” which elevates comedy over criticism and in this way aligns with the Horatian method of “concealing the sharpness of [...] observation” behind a “mask” of “friendly conversation” (Pavlovskis-Petit, 2011, p. 515). In this way Dorset circumvents the overt raillery that is often a hallmark of Juvenalian satire and concurs with her own construction of comedy in her poem ‘On Wit’ that harsh censure should be tempered with good nature:

When calm forbearance checks thy rapid tide,
And judgement deigns, thy erring steps to guide;
While mild good humour tempers every dart,
And bids thee throw thy scorpion lash apart.
Who but must yield to thy bewitching power,
And rather brave the thorn - than lose the flower

These references to “good humour” and to “judgement” are a precursor of Hazlitt’s assertion that wit is only acceptable “as it is sheathed in good humour” (1839, p. 164) and shows the theoretical concepts of the amiable humourist mode allied to gentle satire at work in practice in Dorset’s writing.

The Peacock ‘At Home’ is also a text through which the author often engages with other contemporaneous visual and literary works to build up a nuanced foundation for its humour. The association of birds and humans in the context of a social gathering, for example, was not without precedent in this period. The wearing of bird’s feathers, especially ostrich feathers, as sartorial embellishments by prominent women such as The Duchess of Devonshire and other members of Whig

society was common. Such allusions to these “thrice feather’d belles” (Mary Robinson qtd. in Machell, 2011, p.122) also make an appearance in *The Jackdaw at Home* (1808) through the Ostrich whose “plumes have, at parties, been oft seen before” (p. 9). Thomas Anstey had also previously used the analogy of birds and women in the *New Bath Guide* in 1766, a work which, like Dorset’s text is predicated on gentle social satire, and which had itself instigated a whole raft of imitators in a similar vein stretching into the early nineteenth century (Day, 1948). This connection did not escape the reviewer of Dorset’s work in the *British Critic* who remarks upon the similarities between Anstey’s characters, “Little Miss Wren” and “old Lady Cuckoo” and those “similar personages” in *The Peacock ‘At Home’* (1807, p. 555). In this way the papillonnade, by referencing a pre-existing and well-known humorous hinterland, draws children’s literature into this prevailing narrative.

The Horatian satire of Dorset’s text can also be read against some of the more strident satire to be found in the print culture of the first decades of the nineteenth century. James Gillray’s caricature of the ‘Pic-Nic Club’ printed in 1802 for example, (Fig. 2.4) illustrates a contrasting approach to using a similar metaphoric connection between human and avian species. The ‘Pic-Nic Society’ was a fashionable club founded at this time by a group of Regency elite, including The Prince of Wales, to perform amateur theatricals, but which developed a reputation for debauchery. In this sketch of an evening of musical entertainment featuring prominent society figures, the invitation which can just be seen falling from the violinist’s, Lord Greville’s, pocket presents the various figures as birds in an uncomplimentary fashion. It reads: “Pic Nic Concert—Imitations—Nightingale by Lord C.—Tom Tit Lord ME—Jackdaw Gent G.—Screech Owl Lady B—Poll Parrot...”.



Fig. 2.4. Gillray, James. 'The Pic-Nic Orchestra'. London: Hannah Humphrey, April 23 1802.

Dorset's satiric mode is gentler than that of Gillray where the latter's point of comparison relies upon a knowledge that the noise made by the "Screech Owl" and the other birds will be as grotesque as the obese caricature of Lady Buckinghamshire, despite, presumably, the group's thoughts to the contrary. There is a marked discrepancy between what is perceived by the figures of the satire and the reality and Gillray draws his satire as recognisably personal, thus amplifying the attack. In Dorset's mode of incongruous humour, on the other hand, the satire evolves from what is actually an intentional *congruity* between the actions of the birds and the actions of humans. It may be ridiculously incongruous that the "RAZOR-BILL carv'd for the famishing group, / And the SPOON-BILL obligingly ladled the soup" (p. 15) but is also entirely plausible, in terms of physiognomy, that they should do so. Such a situation is neatly summarised by the critic John Morreall who states in his essay 'Funny Ha-Ha, Funny Strange, and Other Reactions to Incongruity' (1987), that one of the vital parts of incongruity humour is "the fitting of the *apparently* anomalous element into some conceptual schema" (p. 197 original emphasis). That is to say, such humour relies on a shared experience of underlying codes and ideas that are then placed in a different, anomalous context. The schema here is the reader's existing

knowledge of the behaviour of fashionable society with all the contemporary resonances and ideology that this knowledge contains. Moreover, there is a skilful yoking here on the part of Dorset of the artifice of eighteenth-century wit with the ‘natural’ qualities of amiable humour. This text sits in a period where Romantic and Enlightenment attitudes to humour and the child are both keenly felt and Dorset’s work is testament to a fusion of potentially competing contemporary discourses. In this way this text also challenges Ruwe’s notion that this text is essentially “non Romantic” because of its predilection on satiric humour – Dorset straddles the line between two different ideological positions.

This use of congruous incongruity also accords with discussion of this aspect of laughter in the work of James Beattie. In his discussion of the comic Beattie states that, “There is a sort of Ironical Reasoning, not easily described, which would seem to derive the ludicrous character from a surprising mixture of Plausibility and Absurdity” (1776, pp. 360-1). There are two points to note about Beattie’s observations here. Firstly, he admits the necessity of reason to the interpretation of humour. The comic is not, in this situation, an enemy of the rational, as some commentators might suggest, but instead a conduit for it. The child reader must make the link between object and concept and object and an alternative concept in order to make sense of the humour. Secondly, Beattie also recognises that not all incongruous elements are funny, and that even the ones that might be, often depend upon the audience’s pre-existing knowledge and the context of the utterance to make sense. Thus, just as in Bakhtin’s concept of dialogic exchange, *The Peacock ‘At Home’* necessarily draws from surrounding discourses in order to initiate the schema that makes this social satire amusing. Once this has been achieved, the child readers of the work are united under a shared understanding of, and a tacit agreement with, Dorset’s

views on society. Like Dorset's tempering of artificial wit with natural humour, her employment of a mode of 'smiling' satire allows the child reader access to a text where they can play an active interpretative role, and become in Bakhtin's terms not "passive listeners" but rather "active participants] in social communication" (1986, p. 94).

Forced Unity in *The Elephant's Ball*

If Dorset's text strives to achieve a harmonious and good-natured, humorous satire through the skilful inter-weaving of nature with art, then one of Dorset's imitators *The Elephant's Ball* (1808) likewise attempts to join together the natural and the artificial, but for a very different purpose. *The Elephant's Ball*, by the unidentified 'W.B.', was published by John Harris in 1808 as a "companion" to *The Butterfly's Ball* and *The Peacock 'At Home'*. The elephant, echoing the peacock, is upset that "the impudent tribes of the air" should hold a grand party and thus "exceed us in consequence, fashion and show". As such he is determined that "[a] grand rural fete I will shortly provide, / That for pomp, taste and splendour, shall leave far behind / All former attempts of a similar kind" (p. 4). As in *The Peacock 'At Home'*, the emphasis is on outward "show" and the importance of bettering the elephant's avian counterparts. Once again, in the mode of Dorset, the author fits the natural characteristics of animals to their actions as human representatives. Thus the appearance of the Rhinoceros in the wild is used to transform this creature into a soldier "well arm'd with his horn, and his coat of mail hide" (p. 6). However, unlike Dorset's self-conscious allusions to 'display' and outward 'show' which create the space for a satiric critique of such conspicuous excess in the human sphere, the author of *The*

Elephant's Ball reduces implied criticism of aristocratic entertainments by moving away from the artificial display of the opening lines and instead attempts a 'naturalisation' of this gathering of animals. When describing the "scene" of the party, for example, the author positions the event at a physical remove from culture and civilisation in a "valley remote from the dwellings of man" (p. 5). He then further incorporates natural features into what would be ordinarily a scene of artificial ornamentation. It is "embellish'd with trees" and "furnish'd with rivers", the "curtains" are "thick-woven branches" and the "grand canopy" is simply "heaven's high arch" (p. 5). The artificial adornments in *The Peacock 'At Home'* are replaced with 'embellishments' from nature. Instead of the critique of fashionable society which is derived from Dorset's humour in *The Peacock 'At Home'*, with the inherent falsity of the proceedings held up to gentle satire, here the author presents proceedings as 'natural' and by association, innocent, good fun. This point is further emphasised in the vocabulary used to describe the orderliness of the dancing that is "manag'd with skill, and exact regulation" alongside the presentation of games such as "whist, lue, backgammon, quadrille or all-fours" as "pleasing diversions" (p. 12). There is none of the grotesquerie in the feast that is portrayed in *The Eagle's Masque* (1808), and on which I will elaborate shortly. This text instead emphasises how enjoyment is properly derived from such organised and well-ordered events. Indeed, any hint of impropriety is explicitly denied in the text. The animals refrain from alcohol: "on wine and strong spirits few chose to regale, /As most were accustom'd to Adam's old ale" (p. 14), and all the female attendees are accompanied: "ask'd to attend with [their] mate" (p. 9). Even the humour is consciously 'natural' and contributes to the unified presentation of the entertainment. In the very language of the 'amiable humourist', the narrator tells the reader: "*mirth and good humour*

pervaded the throng” and that many animals choose to relate a “*whimsical, laughable story*” (p. 15 emphasis added).

The interaction of this text with *The Peacock 'At Home'* and with prevailing attitudes towards the behaviour of the upper echelons of society along with its insistent deprivileging of artifice in favour of ‘natural’ humour, betrays its “socio-ideological consciousness” (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 276). What *The Elephant's Ball* attempts to do through its humour is to erase contemporary criticism of the aristocracy and at the same time to present the hierarchical class structure of England as both ‘natural’ and unifying. At a time of revolutionary threat to the monarchy, *The Elephant's Ball* reinforces how the gentle good humour of this event is echoed in a well-ordered and stable status quo. Such sentiments are made explicit at the end of the text when the feasting concludes with toasts to “our Host and the Land that we live in”, whilst the Lion sings “Britannia Rule” and “others made all the wide valley to ring / With ‘Nile’s Glorious Battle’, and ‘God Save the King’” (p. 15). The final plate of the book verbalises the jingoistic theme within the visual through the use of speech bubbles (Fig. 2.5).



Fig. 2.5 [Anon.] Plate from *The Elephant's Ball*. W.B. London: John Harris, 1808, facing p. 15

Little wonder then, that the conservative *Gentleman's Magazine* of 1808 praises *The Elephant's Ball* as a “good-humoured and happy satire at the follies of mankind” (p. 136). The phrase “happy satire” is particularly telling - there is in actual fact, unlike in *The Peacock 'At Home'*, very little satiric content in this text directed towards the “follies of mankind”. Instead the child reader is left with a text based on amiable incongruity with an explicit conservative agenda reinforced implicitly through the language employed. As I have indicated, satire without an object of attack is not really satire at all.

Despite the attempts of the author to position through language both humour and hierarchies of office and nationhood as the ‘natural’ order of things, the anonymously drawn illustrations can, however, produce a contradictory reading. The artist frequently depicts status, office and hierarchy as symbolic metonymy rather than inherently innate. Thus in the illustration of the lion as king (Fig. 2.6), the animal’s identity as monarch is signified through all the traditional signs of office: the sceptre, the cloak, and the crown²¹.



Fig. 2.6. Anon. Plate from *The Elephant's Ball*. W.B. [pseud]. London: John Harris, 1808, facing p. 5.

²¹ The crown appears to be a copy of the King Edward Crown which is the official coronation crown of the British monarchy.

Fully anthropomorphised, the Lion physically dominates both the composition of the image and overshadows his servant the jackal whose eyes are cast downwards subserviently. The Lion, conversely, fixes the audience with a confident stare. The long churchwarden pipe smoked by the king gives an additional air of insouciant aloofness whilst the leopard looks on perhaps in exasperation at this hierarchical scene. Like the children dressing up as animals in *The Butterfly's Ball*, the illustrations can be read as indicative of the same posturing and play-acting seen in Dorset's text. However, an alternative reading might be that these symbols of office alongside the figure of the lion itself are so emblematic of kingship that for the nineteenth-century child, used to reading bestiaries and emblem books, the connection between lion, crown, and kingship is one of almost 'natural' proportions. Ideologically, the connection between the lion and royalty, the lion as brave and intrepid has become 'naturalised' and emblematised. The drawing of the lion in the trappings of a king is incongruously amusing to the extent that animals wearing clothing are not 'of nature' and thus ridiculous, but equally the close correlation between the lion and the figure of the king in emblematic terms presents an artificial connection as a natural one and further embeds the royalist ideology of the text deep within the illustrations. This concept of metonymy through inanimate objects and animals is commented on by Frances Hutcheson in his seminal appraisal of incongruity theory:

[t]he very affections of our minds are ascribed to inanimate objects; and some animals, perfect enough in their own kind, are made constant emblems of some vices or meanness: whereas other kinds are made emblems of the contrary qualities. [...] An ass is the common emblem of stupidity and sloth, a swine of selfish luxury; an eagle of great genius; a lion of intrepidity; and ant or bee of low industry, and prudent economy. Some inanimate objects have in like manner some accessory ideas of meanness, either for some natural reason, or oftener by mere chance and custom. (1750, p. 18)

This idea of ‘naturalisation’ employed by W.B. and reinforced by Hutcheson is also echoed in the rhetoric used by the politician and philosopher Edmund Burke, who presents an anti-Revolution, conservative agenda in his 1790 tract *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, and who was a profound influence on British politics and society at this time. Just as in *The Elephant's Ball*, Burke portrays hereditary succession as connected to order in the world, that is, derived from the “happy effect of following nature”, and he criticises those who attempt to ‘level’ society of its social hierarchies as “pervert[ing] the natural order of things” (p. 33; p. 253). In this way, *The Elephant's Ball* engages on a deep level with contemporary conservative debate and its support of the British monarchy in turbulent times.

Juvenalian Satire in *The Council of Dogs*

Within the space of two interlinked texts, John Harris’ list shows two differing interpretations of the papillonnade form. Although *The Peacock ‘At Home’* and *The Elephant's Ball* seem at first glance very similar, in fact the humour employed moves from light Horatian satire against the posturing and the preening of the upper classes in Dorset’s text, to a naturalisation and tacit validation of this behaviour in *The Elephant's Ball*. However, in my discussion of *The Council of Dogs* (1808), another text published by Harris, the papillonnade takes on a further incarnation by moving away from Horatian mockery towards a much harsher Juvenalian mode. In so doing Harris’ child audience, who has experienced the enforcement of an explicit conservative agenda in *The Elephant's Ball*, is now placed in the centre of a quite antithetical debate concerning class inequality, and also regarding the nature of the

satiric form itself. *The Elephant's Ball* and *The Council of Dogs* are at opposite poles of the satiric continuum, with the former resisting satiric censure (despite the *Gentleman's Magazine's* claim to the contrary), and the latter not only pointing out social injustice, but also moving towards a call for its correction.

The Council of Dogs commences in the same way as many other papillonnades with indignation at the parties held by other animals and birds and a desire to proclaim the worth of their own species:

The Greyhound first rose, with a spring from his seat.
Scarcely bending the grass, that grew under his feet;
His figure was airy, and placid his mien;
Yet to flash in his eye indignation was seen. —
“Brave companions”, said he, “shall *we* noble beasts
Hear of *Butterflies Balls* and *Grasshoppers Feasts*?
Hear dinned in our ears, wherever we roam,
The Mask seeing *Lion and Peacock* at Home?
Shall we hear all this, nor assert the fair fame
That for ages long past has distinguished our name?” —
(p. 4. original emphasis)

Yet from the outset, this group of animals represents a heterogeneous mix of social classes. From the “meagre cur” (p. 6) to the “courtier-like” Spaniel (p. 7), discord and infighting between breeds is immediately evident: the poodle slights the greyhound and the Scotch Terrier verbally attacks the Turnspit. However, these verbal spars fade into insignificance when faced with the horrifying appearance of a starving dog with a “blood-red” eye and “fleshless” body, shaking with “weakness”, whose mien betrays “death and starvation” (p. 15). This animal is indignant not about the ‘routs’ of the other species but about the reality of his situation and the implications of the 1796 dog tax legislation which meant many dog owners could no longer afford to keep their animals:

“You may talk of Parnassus and Poets,” he cried,
 “Of their scorn, and neglect, may complain in your pride,
 But that is all vanity, folly, conceit,
 The disgust of the pamper'd, the pride of the great;
 Look at me; I am starved—In yon hamlet I dwelt
 And contented for years no distresses I felt,
Till the TAX, that my master had no means to pay,
 From the comforts of home drove me famished away;
 'Tis for *life* I contend—Praise, Honour, Renown,
 The song of the Bard, or the laureate Crown,
 Will ne'er teach my blood in its freshness to flow,
 Ne'er teach me with health and with vigour to glow;” (p. 15 original emphasis)

As Ruwe asserts, the references to John Dent's ‘Dog Tax Bill’ are not really the point of the poem, rather it is a work about class relations and the regulation of the lower orders (2014, p. 326). This text is now stripped of its humorous tone, reverting instead to overt social comment in a Juvenalian mode where the poetry turns the very language of the papillonnade back on itself. The heroic couplets as a traditional marker of the Juvenalian form reinforce the scathing tone. The author reproaches the attendance in the papillonnade mode, to empty vanities and social squabbling (“the disgust of the pamper'd, the pride of the great”), whilst real hardship ensues for the outcast dog/the working classes. The criticism present is thus two-fold, vested against the harsh inequalities manifest within the class system in England, and against the papillonnade genre for turning such serious concerns into light-hearted verse which highlight folly but has no real concern for deep social change. In this latter formulation, the papillonnade genre as a whole is party to an important contemporary discussion concerning satire where, as Dyer states in *British Satire and the Politics of Style*, many commentators opposed the rise of the amiable humourist mode with its “laughing face”. Such critics condemned the perceived ineffectual nature of the Horatian mode where “the severest strokes of the satirist have been too often

sacrificed to make room for his wit” (George Daniel qtd. in Dyer p. 52). The fact that humorous “wit” is present in the first half of this poem, makes the stripping of this amusement even more poignant and hard-hitting. *The Council of Dogs* uses the popularity of the papillonnade form to emphasise its point, lulling its readers into a sense that this work is just yet another variation on the butterfly theme, but is in reality, condemning the very vehicle of that writing. The intertextual context of the other papillonnades helps to give full force to the author’s censure. The fact that this text is on Harris’ juvenile list draws the child into radical politics and gives a very different perspective on the purpose of laughter and satire in this era - one that is an uneasy fit with the concept of genial humour and the positioning of the child away from the laughter of scorn.

The Council of Dogs is, in fact, a rare example of this type of satire in works for children, however, the papillonnade texts were such a phenomenon in the early part of the nineteenth century that many writers for an adult audience also either borrowed the butterfly formula, refashioning and playing with this concept, or alluded to the sub-genre in order to make similar points to those in *The Council of Dogs*. For example, in 1810, Edward Goulburn produced a vitriolic satire entitled *The Pursuits of Fashion: A Satirical Poem*, which focuses on the state of the nation and the corrupt nature of the aristocracy. Here the shallow yet smiling world of the papillonnades is transposed into the pointless world of the vacuous young buck:

But at balls and assemblies my principal sway,
It is there I’m at home, and I have all my own way;
What rout can be decent, what party can shine,
If absent the hopes of the Butterfly line? (p. 51)

The concept of the “at home” taken from the “Butterfly line” now becomes a play on words - this man is only comfortable (‘at home’) in this world of no real significance.

The entry of this reference into a different sort of work (this one is far removed from the theme of a gathering of animals) signifies how widespread was the influence of these papillonnades. They reverberated across socio-literary boundaries and the adult/child divide to achieve a reach far beyond the nursery. Publications such as the anonymous *The Parliament of Isaphan* (1810) for example, even plays with the concept of a dual adult/child audience. In a preface amusing in itself and which mocks the Romantic preoccupation with antiquity by professing to be a poem “translated from the Persian”, the author concludes by stating:

Ye British Reviewers, ye full-grown Critics, this work is not intended for you!
And as I have learned that it is one of the privileges of your Constitution, to
permit the arraigned culprit to choose his Jury, or to reject a Jury he does not
approve, I claim my privilege - for Children I have written, and by them *only*
will I be judged (p. viii - original emphasis)

This preface, particularly with its reference to judicial procedures, is perhaps designed to provide cover for the potentially seditious character of this text with the author proclaiming the work to be ‘simply’ a children’s story. However, even though *The Monthly Review* states: “we are convinced his *Parliament of Isaphan* is too *recondite* for the nursery.” (1810, p. 105 original emphasis), the very reference to the child here emphasises the underlying fluidity of papillonnade humour regardless of the intended audience for the text. There are also many other examples of the reach of the papillonnade genre outside of the nursery sphere. *The Congress of Crowned Heads or The Flea’s Turtle-Feast and The Louse’s Dress-Ball: A Satirical Poem* was published by J. Hatchard in 1808, and acknowledges in the preface, that it was written in order to “be in the [papillonnade] fashion” (p. 6). Here the butterfly theme becomes a harsh satire on European royalty, likening Kings, Queens and Emperors to parasitical insects such as the Flea and the Louse. Likewise, the *Asses’ Jubilee* printed

in Manchester in 1809 makes a similar disparaging comparison between the King's Jubilee and the animal species of the title. These examples are much more Juvenalian in tone than the light verse of the majority of the papillonnades written for children, and the targets of their attacks are more specific than in the social satires of Dorset. Such texts require a specific knowledge of contemporary personalities and/or events in order to decode the laughter and censure at work, and they join *The Council of Dogs* in importing acerbic satire into the framework of the papillonnade. Although many are not directly published for children, their use of the form illustrates how the butterfly theme with the child at its very centre, was an important, prevalent and understood component of early nineteenth-century culture and literature.

And yet with this success came also censure. As I have discussed, the humour in papillonnades such as *The Peacock 'At Home'* frequently betrays ideological tensions between Romantic and Enlightenment configurations of the child and the comic mode. This is particularly true of the satiric form itself, not just in contemporary debate concerning the relative merits and suitability of Horatian versus Juvenalian modes, but also in terms of the child and the necessity of knowledge to ensure successful satire. In an 1820 article in the *London Magazine*, an anonymous commentator alludes to this topic when he decries children's books published by Harris and John Marshall where the "scandals of the drawing room become the sports of the nursery" or where "fathers and mothers present their children with caricatures of their own foibles and pretensions" (p. 480). He maintains that a "child's mind should if possible be preserved" from the "contaminating knowledge" (p. 480) of, amongst other subjects, "dandy courtships" and "coxcombical clerks" (p. 481). Alan Richardson in his essay 'Nineteenth-Century Children's Satire and the Ambivalent Reader' (1990), rightly points out that this "resistance [...] to satire" is predicated on a

“myth of innocence” which is “fatally threatened by satire” precisely because an understanding of this type of humour requires knowledge of concepts and conventions outside the text (p. 123 & 124). The *London Magazine* editorial praises literature such as fairy tales that, as Richardson also attests, are predicated, like the moral tale, on simplicity and certitude rather than the complicated readings and understanding that satire requires (p. 123). However, in his essay Richardson does not discuss these papillonnades and how prevalent and varied is the satiric mode within these works. Instead he relegates *The Peacock 'At Home'* to a footnote of “more innocent” texts, conflating it with *The Butterfly's Ball* and *Old Mother Hubbard* (p. 125). As my discussion has shown, however, these texts are far from ‘innocent’ in a naïve sense since satire requires such a complex understanding, not only of the gap between text and intention, but also of the literary devices - word-play, metaphor, metonymy and irony - with which this mode is frequently overlaid. The child reader thus requires the kind of “intellectual dexterity” posited by Dugald Stewart (1822, p. 151) to interpret the “full resources of [this] system of language” (Simpson p. 3). My next section analyses some of these complexities in two papillonnades, *The Lion's Parliament* and *The Modern Minerva*, and discusses how humour in these texts encourages an active and engaged child reader rather than the (mythical) naïve and innocent child constructed in *The London's* review.

Political Debate in *The Lion's Parliament*

The Peacock 'At Home', *The Elephant's Ball* and *The Council of Dogs* are works where the historical and political context of the era in which they were written is of great significance to their interpretation and to elements of their humour. My

discussion in the following section concerns texts that are similarly rooted in contemporary politics and debate. If *The Council of Dogs* criticises other papillonnades for their vacuity, then *The Lion's Parliament* (1808) and *The Modern Minerva or The Bat's Seminary for Young Ladies: A Satire on Female Education* (1810) show how Horatian satiric humour can be used to engage their readers in 'serious' subjects such as politics and education.

In the years 1807-9 when the majority of papillonnades were published, Britain was embroiled in the Napoleonic Wars and the fight against Napoleon's rapid expansion into Europe. The initial optimism that the French Revolution had generated in radical quarters in the closing years of the eighteenth century had dissipated with the events of the Terror and Napoleon's subsequent and seemingly unstoppable march through Europe. These years brought the start of the Peninsular War in Spain and Portugal and fervent anti-French feeling coupled with a widespread jingoistic agenda concerning Britain's role in Europe. The events triggered by the French Revolution suffused the literature and the culture of this period. In children's literature, however, critics such as Matthew Grenby have revealed that politics rarely impinged on writing for children. He discusses how even the revolutionary William Godwin was reticent to use his works for children as a vehicle for radical politics (2003, p. 3). Grenby cites examples of texts where Revolutionary France is used as a setting for literature for children but very few where contemporary political events lie at the heart of the text (p. 15). Some of the papillonnades however, tell a different story. I have already discussed how *The Elephant's Ball* inscribes a conservative agenda that reinforces the existing status quo and supports the monarchy. Yet what is perhaps surprising given the marked lack of treatment of politics in children's literature at this time and the generally light-hearted tone of the papillonnades, is the number of butterfly texts

which refer to contemporary events either in passing, or, in some cases, in a specific treatment of particular aspects of politics. In *The Lion's Parliament* (1808) for example, the author uses humour to tread a careful line between allowing his young readers access to a sophisticated and fully realised presentation of contemporary political events with all their inherent anxieties, and writing an engaging narrative which ultimately galvanises its child readers behind a loyalist agenda. The comic mode also allows for a certain degree of satirisation and criticism of the political posturing in the House of Commons in a more serious echo of the social showboating inherent in *The Peacock 'At Home'* and other texts.

The Lion's Parliament references a debate triggered by George III's request to the House of Commons in 1803 for support from MPs in numerous measures to protect against the threat of a probable French assault on England. This event is reported in *The Morning Post* for the 4th of June 1803 where it is stated that:

[a] desire had been expressed that Parliament should pledge itself to make preparations [against threat of French invasion]; Parliament had given that pledge in the Address which had been carried up to his Majesty.

The failure of the Treaty of Amiens in May 1803 had resulted in the resumption of war between England and France, and Napoleon had amassed 130,000 troops on the cliffs around Calais with 2,000 landing craft available to transport the men over the channel. With Napoleon's position strengthening still further with his coronation as Emperor in May 1804, the possibility of a French invasion was a constant threat. Even after Nelson's victory at Trafalgar in 1805 had effectively dispelled this concern, there still remained the possibility, until the end of hostilities in 1815, that Napoleon's army could regroup and mount an assault on Great Britain. *The Lion's Parliament* reflects this backdrop with the beasts proffering their opinions in support

of war or negotiation with France. Ruwe is dismissive of this text, terming it a “straightforward, propagandist, patriotic chapbook” (2003, p. 129). And there is certainly no contesting the fact that there is a jingoistic undercurrent to the work. However, in taking and mutating the form of the papillonnade and engaging so explicitly with contemporary political events in a text for children, this text deserves deeper exploration.

This work is different to other butterfly texts in that it illustrates not a gathering of the haut ton but a meeting in the House of Commons with the animals performing the roles of a variety of political figures. Indeed, the subject is not the light-hearted frivolities of *The Peacock 'At Home'* or *The Elephant's Ball*, but instead “matters of serious debate” (p. 3) and “critical news” (p. 4) of the threat of French invasion. The text's association with the butterflies comes from its contemporaneity with other such works, from the concept of animals mirroring human behaviour and a close association of the individual characteristics of the animals with those of the specific humans for which they are substituted. In addition, the author's use of the papillonnade form, which was, by this date well-known to a contemporary audience, allows these more serious and potentially unsettling events to reference the framework of this ‘safe’ and familiar literary trope. The humorous form itself thus forms part of an elaborate mitigation of the Napoleonic threat through its gentle humour.

Part of this moderation of threat comes from the presentation of Napoleon himself as a “Tiger” whose “ambitious, extravagant views [...] / Now threatens, vain Despot, with malice and guile, / Our laws to subvert, and to ravage our isle” (p. 5). As with the King in *The Elephant's Ball*, emblematic association is used to link Napoleon with a strong, animal that has also come to represent Empire and

expansionism. The twin negative adjectives of “malice and guile” along with the vocabulary of illegal violation further distances this figure from the rule of law associated with England. The image of the tiger also interpolates this text into the language of adult caricature with contemporary prints showing a close link of the French leader with this animal (Figs. 2.7 and 2.8).



Fig. 2.7. Rowlandson, Thomas. ‘The Corsican Tiger’. London: Rudolf Ackermann, July 8 1808.



Fig. 2.8 Holland, William. ‘Injecting Blood Royal or Phlebotomy at St Cloud’. London. June, 1804

In these two examples this association incorporates a competing and complicated dialectic where the innately threatening characteristics of the tiger are presented in regard to Napoleon as elements that the French leader attempts to achieve by artificial means (being injected with tiger’s blood or ‘dressing up’ as the animal). By ridiculing Napoleon’s ambitions, the threat of the man is diminished. Similarly, in *The Lion’s Parliament*, Napoleon must be presented as threatening enough to warrant action taken by the commons, yet also denigrated in the face of the righteousness of the English stance. Thus one of the first animal speakers to support the King in his campaign against the Tiger is “Earl Bull” representing John Bull, the emblem of England, in direct opposition to the Tiger. This figure sets the tone of fervent nationalism and negative phraseology in regard to Napoleon that pervades the poem.

In order to reassure as well as inform his young readers, however, the author introduces a whiff of the mock heroic to Earl Bull's speech:

He spoke with the ardour of national heat.
"By the Beams of the Moon, and the rays of the Sun!
The Vain Despot's intentions shall never be done." (p. 5)

The exaggeration of language in summoning the support of the "Moon" and the "Sun" to England's cause has the effect of satirising the posturing taking place during this debate. This aspect is further emphasised by the speech of "Baron Horse" who "exclaimed with a neigh /I agree, noble Earl with all that you say. / Should the Tiger advance as he boasts he will do, / I'll charge him with vigour as fiercely as you" (p. 6). The horse's neigh reflects the 'ayes' and 'nays' pervading the chamber during a debate such as this and evokes the somewhat ludicrous image of a horse charging a tiger. The speech has serious intent but is overlaid with comic overtones that use laughter to overcome the potential for fear²². Furthermore, the Bull and the Horse as domesticated animals with associations of loyalty and 'Englishness' are, pitched against the wild ferocity of the Tiger. Napoleon-as-Tiger thus becomes the exotic 'other', the complete antithesis of Englishness and rule of law and as such, although the author gently mocks the nationalist fervour of the Bull and the Horse, he leaves the reader in no doubt as to the righteousness of the cause against Napoleon.

There is also a great deal of contextualisation in this poem not least in the passage that deals with England's naval supremacy in conflict. The association of certain animals with specific political figures is usually a negative comparison and tends to be the preserve of the papillonnades aimed at an adult audience, or as I have

²² See Warner, 1998 for a discussion of this use of humour in nursery rhymes and other literature.

discussed, is common in print culture. However here, the association between animal and human is specific but also positive. The child reader is encouraged to make the connections between emblematic animal characteristics and their human counterparts. In 1798 Admiral Lord Nelson had won the Battle of the Nile, virtually destroying the French fleet and preventing Napoleon's encroachment into North Africa. This victory earned Nelson the title 'Baron of the Nile', and Emma Hamilton jokingly called him 'Baron Crocodile.' Thus when "Admiral CROCODILE" begins to speak of fighting "for his Country, his King, and the Laws" so that "His Monarch should still be *King of the Sea!*", the metonymic link for contemporary audiences between man and animal would have been strong. England's confidence in its naval strength is exemplified in the rhetoric of this section. To the concept of King George III as "The King of the Sea" is added the words of another 'seafaring' animal "Lord Otter", who applauds Admiral Crocodile's speech "with delight / The empire of waters he said was *our right*" (p. 10. original emphasis). Such vocabulary also interpolates into the very fabric of the poem, the Burkean idea of liberty as "entailed inheritance" (2009, p. 253): The young "Prince de Lion" perhaps the Duke of Wellington - is a "Prince of the Blood" and he wishes to fight for "Those principles founded on freedom alone, / Which caused his own race to be call'd to the throne" (p. 11). This presentation of hereditary succession as liberty is contrasted strongly with the new French republic, supposedly founded on the same tenets of freedom, but which under Napoleon had taken a less favourable turn. In the final account, Republicanism is entirely discredited through a set piece presentation of the King as Monarch. The description of the monarch when the members of the parliament presents their decision to him, pivots, as I have discussed in *The Elephants Ball*, upon the outward displays of state. The Lion is on his throne, protected by Apes with a retinue of "pages and aid-de-

camps, PUPPIES, so nice” who “in awe kept the servants, the RATS and the MICE”, whilst “the BULL-DOGS, the guards, kept the rabble away, / Drawn up by the Mastiff in martial array” (p. 14). The scene is extremely hierarchical with animal taxonomies linked to human ranks. “The BULL-DOGS” seem to be protecting both the King and the parliament not only from the physical proximity of the “rabble” in terms of the massed crowd, but also in operating as the emblem of England, shielding the country and the King from Jacobin tendencies arising in his own citizens. Like the island itself, the King is pictured isolated, (“on the verge of the wood” (p. 14)), ring-fenced by layers of hierarchy, of tradition against the tide of revolution. If the presence of the “rabble” has the potential for threat, then the last lines of the poem dispel this with, as in *The Elephant’s Ball*, a cry of unity and loyalty. When the King declares that “should this fierce TIGER his forces display, / We’ll destroy then on land, or we’ll sink them at sea! / The mob, when they heard of so glorious a thing, / Threw their hats in the air, crying *God Save the King!*” (p. 16). Royalism and the threat of a more menacing option in the shape of Napoleon, unites both the discordant MPs and ultimately denies any rift between ruler and citizens or between party factions. The ending of *The Lion’s Parliament* is a pure exposition of Burke’s concept of hereditary privilege and constitution preserving a “unity in so great a diversity of its parts” (2009, p. 33). The use of the amiable humour of the papillonnade framework allows a concordance of form and subject that further underscores for its juvenile audience the importance of the unification of England behind a national agenda and the way in which humour can regulate as well as subvert.

The Thoroughly *Modern Minerva*

After the political anxieties of *The Lion's Parliament*, *The Modern Minerva* returns to social concerns, satirising the subject of upper middle-class education for girls. The text ridicules the concentration in many small pedagogic academies in this era on social skills such as dancing, music and dress at the expense of academic learning: “about such minutiae to trouble the head, / Madame and her teachers were much too well-bred” (p. 10). This is a subject that *The Monthly Review* notes as particularly pertinent to this period, stating that: “[p]arents who have a daughter to educate should read Queen Mab; and, having first laughed at her wit, let them then reflect on the lessons which, under the guise of a fable, she means to inculcate” (p. 218). It is a subject that had been of considerable debate since Mary Wollstonecraft's repudiation in *A Vindication of the Rights of Women* (1792) of Jean-Jacques Rousseau's dismissive attitudes to female education. In 1813 it is also a subject to which Jane Austen alludes in *Pride and Prejudice* when the snobbish Miss Bingley remarks:

[...] no one can be really esteemed accomplished who does not greatly surpass what is usually met with. A woman must have a thorough knowledge of music, singing, drawing, dancing, and the modern languages, to deserve the word; and besides all this, she must possess a certain something in her air and manner of walking, the tone of her voice, her address and expressions, or the word will be but half-deserved. (1996, p. 135)

Miss Bingley's definition of accomplishment closely mirrors that shown in *The Modern Minerva* where the teaching of dancing and singing are accompanied by lessons in elegant deportment and socialisation. Mr Darcy's reply that academic learning must accompany these shallow attributes (“her mind [must be improved] by extensive reading” (p. 135)), echoes the satiric humour of the papillonnade in undercutting the short sighted and socially condescending nature of Miss Bingley's

view. *The Modern Minerva* and Austen's contemporaneous text thus occupy the same "social dialogue" on the subject of the education of girls, and as such illustrate the essentially dialectic nature of these papillonnades. *The Modern Minerva* also draws from *The Peacock 'At Home'* in terms of the showy, frivolous and trivial social whirl portrayed therein, and moreover, through the character of the bat, affects a kind of double contextualisation for the satire. In *The Modern Minerva*, the bat who is excluded from the Peacock's rout because of her status outside the avian species, sets up her school for young ladies in order to disprove the insinuation that she is not refined enough for the social set surrounding the peacock. The school quickly attracts a following of "birds of all feather" (p. 7) and establishes an elite reputation that is a triumphant overturning of the bat's status as lowly outcast in *The Peacock 'At Home'*. Now this creature gains a high class following from the mothers who "flock'd round the dame", each "noble matron" believing that the bat, will encourage the social exclusion of which she herself was a victim. They assume that: "[m]eaner birds were excluded this superfine school" and presume that no

[...] inferior beings could dare
With the offspring of grandeur to breathe the same air,
And rejoic'd to imagine the ivy so big
That her darling might roost on a separate twig" (p. 7).

As well as the comic satirisation of snobbery and entitlement, the humour here depends on the reader's knowledge of the bat's (non) appearance in *The Peacock 'At Home'* for a further ironical overlay. Without this intertextual knowledge the comic satirisation of education is still accessible to the reader, however the subtler device of irony is missed. Such nuances reveal the complex intertextuality of these works and further underlines the varied levels of "mental dexterity" that such humour demands. In an age when the education of middle-class children was of the utmost concern to

parents under an Enlightenment agenda, both the subject and the satiric humour of *The Modern Minerva* admits a vital role for humour as an integral part of moral rationalism rather than in opposition to it. This is a point emphasised by Lissa Paul when she notes that:

[i]n the early nineteenth century, books produced for children still addressed the capacities of their young readers for rational thought. The assumption about childhood innocence that increasingly characterized books intended for children in the later decades of the century – indeed for the following two hundred years – had not yet become fixed in cultural ideology (2011, p. 8)

This is not, therefore, a naïve text of innocent laughter but one in which the reader is required to possess extra-textual knowledge and as a result draw an important message from the work.

Having established the social class of attendees at the school, the satire then goes on to describe the bat eschewing her plain status and changing her name to “Madame Chauvesouris”, because “a school must of course rise in merit and fame, / If the Governess boast of a Frenchified name” (p. 8). Again there is an irony in the bat rejecting her initial lowly status, but also a two-fold satirisation involving the French. The author ridicules the race generally as frivolous and concerned only with fashionable appearances, an anti-French sentiment that, as I have discussed, is prevalent in this period of continuing war with France, but she also satirises more specifically the French female educationalists such as Madame de Genlis who, in the latter part of the eighteenth-century, had made a large impact on English pedagogy²³ This is an element that, as in *The Lion’s Parliament*, negates Darton’s observation that there is little “evidence that public events had much to do with the vogue [of the

²³ See Chapter 5 for my discussion of the influence of the French Théâtre d’Éducation movement. See also Brown, 2007, p. 128 ff, for an extended critique of Madame de Genlis. Katherine Harris also discusses the publisher Rudolf Ackermann’s eagerness to satirise the French in line with the prevalent nationalistic mood in England (2015, p. 44)

papillonnades]” (1982, p. 210).

At the end of *The Modern Minerva*, the bat organises a fête to allow her well-bred young ladies to display their social skills. Envisaged as the high-point of her career and with the bat comically pondering home improvements with the extra income that this coup de grâce will provide, this gathering unfortunately turns to disaster. Grimalkin the cat makes an appearance and a ‘pupil’ is killed, leaving the terrified parents and students to flee in fear and disgust at the bat’s carelessness. The bat is left to lament her loss and regret that she ever embarked on such an undertaking. The ending does ensure that the young birds, who have grown vain and conceited under the bat’s teaching, are punished, thus completing the satire of an education system filled with form but no substance. However, the downfall of the bat might also be read as a reinforcement of human class structure, rather than a satirisation of it; as a warning against attempting to transgress social hierarchies. In a society where social hierarchies were becoming less entrenched and where movement between the classes was possible for the first time, this satire could represent an undermining of its own attempt to warn the upper classes about their behaviours, becoming thus, at the same time a dismissal of those who reach above their designated status. In *British Satire and the Politics of Style*, Dyer discusses this conservative impulse in the satiric mode. He states that this tendency surfaced particularly in the early 1800s because of the threat to “English values” of “‘Jacobinism’ at home and the military aggressions of France” (1997, p. 40), thus creating a desire for satire that reinforced the status quo. In this way, many of the children’s texts of the papillonnades can be read as components of this wider movement, an aspect that reinforces the dialogism of these humorous papillonnades and illustrates the importance of this type of writing to children’s literature in this

period. Yet, as I have shown in *The Council of Dogs*, the butterfly form also has many satiric possibilities. Thus to end my discussion of these texts, my final section analyses a work which enacts a more subversive and even more complex form of satire that interpolates the child reader into the very heart of the text.

Comic Grotesquerie in *The Eagle's Masque*

If *The Elephant's Ball* and *The Lion's Parliament* use humour to reinforce a conservative agenda, then *The Eagle's Masque* (1808) does something very different. In this text the pseudonymous author, 'Tom Tit' plays with concepts of nature, artifice, identity and society to produce a humorous text that satirises and challenges the status quo. The text begins once again with reference to *The Butterfly's Ball* and *The Peacock 'At Home'*. The Peacock's "Gala" is so "gay" that "the Genius of Mirth flew in every direction/ [so] The Queen [eagle] on her cliff caught the raging infection" and all the birds are invited to a "Grand Masquerade" (p. 3). The appearance of the masquerade ball in the papillonnades is a recurring theme and often birds (or other animals) dress in costumes that are antithetical to their nature. For example, in *The Lioness's Rout* (1808) the animals draw cards to see what character they are going to become, thus "the Fox was a Lamb, with his bleat so pathetic" and the Rhinoceros becomes "a kitten, so playful and brisk" (p. 19). In Tess Cosslett's work *Speaking Animals in British Children's Literature*, this critic links the many references to masquerades to the tradition of the eighteenth-century masquerade ball. In the mid 1700s this popular activity was replete with subversive undertones where disguise was used to hide identity and to allow participants to take on an identity

removed from their real situation. Critics of these balls saw the element of disguise as promoting sexual licentiousness and lewd behaviour, but others enjoyed their carnivalesque freedom. As the century wore on, however, their popularity waned and they became repurposed as something akin to the modern day fancy dress party for children (Cosslett, 2006, pp. 53-4). In *The Eagle's Masque* the author transforms this playful inversion into a kind of burlesque humour focusing on the birds' ludicrous attempts to imitate other birds. James Beattie defines burlesque as a way in which to amplify that which is already ludicrous by "purposely degrading [the object] by vulgar language and mean circumstances" (1776, p. 375). This explanation of burlesque as a type of exaggerated parody perfectly suits the theatricality in the descriptions contained in *The Eagle's Masque*. The reader is told that: "the huge albatross, with his crony, the PENGUIN" "Had hop'd their identity nicely to veil, / By attempting the waddle and cry of the QUAIL" (p. 4). Equally ridiculously the tiny wren "bend[s] under the beak of the toucan!" and the author inverts the renowned musicality of the Nightingale who by wearing "A green Domino" becomes a parrot who "kept screaming "poor Polly!" (p.8). It is a farcical and overtly theatrical sight that talks not to unity but to fracture. If Dorset and W.B. in their texts are at pains to ally the natural characteristics of their subjects with their human equivalents, then Tom Tit aims instead to foreground strongly the ridiculousness and acute artificiality of human masquerade balls through the ludicrous nature of the birds' costumes. This description courts discord over unity and as such its light-hearted comicality is not completely aligned with the discourse of the amiable humourist. Such fracture is further intensified by the grotesquerie also present in the descriptions of the "BUTCHER-BIRD" who threateningly "make[s] up to a dove" (p. 8), and the Coot, Curlew, Mallard and Teal who have the Razor Bill "slit" the webs "of each

membranous foot” in order to disguise themselves as other birds (p. 7).

In a similar way the description of the “Ostrich gallanting a humming bird” (p. 10) foregrounds unnaturalness: their “dalliance uncouth” is deemed a “monstrous endearment” (p. 11), a spectacle that is the unlikely romantic alliance of sizes and species. Incongruity thus becomes absurdity and as Hazlitt explains in *On The English Comic Writers*, absurdity can provoke disgust as well as comedy: “we laugh at absurdity [...] a giant standing by a dwarf makes a contemptible figure enough” (1845, p. 5). Indeed, this particular allusion has vivid contemporary resonance when allied to the reference to Count Boruwlaski earlier on in the text (p. 7). Boruwlaski was a dwarf figure who came across from Poland in the early 1800s and became a darling of aristocrats including The Duchess of Devonshire and The Prince Regent, who ambivalently viewed him as both a bizarre curiosity and a fashionable ‘pet/child’.²⁴ This underlying attraction/repulsion towards such a figure of curiosity is extended in this text to the entrance of the Dodo at the ball. As the avian equivalent of Count Boruwlaski, this creature becomes a ‘curiosity’ under the cruel gaze of the Chatterer, Jay, Daw and Owl who comment that the bird is “created it seems but to stare and to stuff” (p. 16). The description of the dodo as reported by the owl, hinges on the hybridity of the bird’s appearance; the Dodo becomes at once, part animal, part bird, part fish, part inanimate object. “What is it, good Owl?” asks the Daw, to which the Owl replies:

Why a logger-head Turtle half turned to a fowl!
Or a wool-sack alive! - or a porpoise with wings! –
(I’d be seen at noon day but to hear how it sings! -)
Or in short - if I dare such a fancy set up -
‘Tis a *chicken-rhinoceros*, ready to pup! (pp. 15-16 original emphasis)

²⁴ See Benedict, 2006, p.78-106

Such a presentation of the dodo reflects a prevailing culture where difference, as Barbara Benedict suggests in her essay on Count Boruwlaski (2006), was “widely recognised as a physical phenomenon”. She goes on to state, “throughout Europe, mineral, vegetable, animal and man-made curiosities attracted wide audiences because of their proximity to, yet difference from, what was considered the ordinary form” (p. 80). The human-yet-not-human-dwarf; the birds disguised as other birds, which are in turn imitating man; the species confusing in their hybridity, all these elements conflate in *The Eagle's Masque* to produce a note of grotesque discord which burlesques both the human masquerade ball and also undermines the “neat and natural humour” which the *British Critic* references as characteristic of the first papillonnades. This vulgarity and distaste that both Beattie and Hazlitt expound here is not a feature of the other texts that I have analysed in this chapter: neither biting in its attack nor gently comic in its style, this text has an alliance with a third type of literary mockery, Menippean satire. This protean form that is often considered in relation to prose satire and which, according to Northrop Frye’s definition in *The Anatomy of Criticism* (1957), criticises entrenched mental attitudes usually represented by various speaking characters rather than attacking specific figures or social conventions (1974, pp. 309-12). Like Tom Tit’s descriptions in *The Eagle's Masque* it is a hybrid form that frequently makes use of burlesque and the comic grotesque. Indeed, in *The Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics* (1963) Bakhtin lauds Rabelais’ *Gargantua and Pantagruel* as the epitome of this form. *The Eagle's Masque* does not possess the extent of the grotesqueries present in Rabelais text, however its use of incongruity in this grotesque sense does draw on the Menippean tradition. Such an aspect reaches its apotheosis at the Eagle’s feast where the reader is told that:

The tongues of the delicate all were at work.
In abusing that foul-feeding savage the STORK,
For harpooning live frogs with his double-prong'd fork;
While the BUSTARD by few was esteem'd over nice.
For supping so sweetly on moles, and on mice ...
The BLACKBIRD, beside, rais'd a host of deriders,
For piling his plate up with dozens of spiders (p. 21 original emphasis)

The interesting aspect of this account is that of course the natural eating behaviour of these birds is exactly that described here. Yet contrast this to Dorset's spoonbill ladling soup and her razor bill carving the meat, and ironically, the most 'natural' of descriptions in *The Eagle's Masque* foregrounds animalistic characteristics which become incongruously grotesque and uncomfortable when related to the underlying schema of a high society dinner party. The satiric qualities of this text are more radical and anarchic than that in *The Peacock 'At Home'*. The underlying message in *The Eagle's Masque* is the proximity of man and animal not in the humorously congruous mode of Dorset but in the unsettling manner of Tom Tit. The implication is not that animals are imitating man but that man is really a thinly disguised animal. The mode of the comic grotesque in this text that finds expression through hybridity of species speaks to contemporary anxieties concerning the evolution of species and man's proximity to the animal kingdom²⁵.

However, that is not to say that *The Eagle's Masque* is all dark grotesquerie; indeed, quite the reverse is true. Rather like the hybridity of identity that infuses this text, so the humour is a fusion of Hobbesian comic mode, forced punning, burlesque and grotesquerie - the kind of mixed modes that are characteristic of Menippean satire. The first thing to note is the humour in absurdity of a wren struggling to hold

²⁵ Lodge, 2007 explores this critical part of understanding the comic grotesque in relation to Thomas Hood (see chapter 4, particularly pp. 122-4)

on the beak of a Toucan, or a flamingo doubling up his own legs and attempting to walk on the “squab legs of a duckling” (p. 9). The exaggerated theatricality of the body here, foreshadows my discussion of pantomime humour in Chapter 5 where similarly corporeal contortions and hyperbolic costumes provoke audience laughter. Such elements also enable the author to live up to his assertion in the preface to the text that his writing is something which his “dear boys and girls” will find amusing. Here, ‘Tom Tit’ goes on to state that the lack of explanatory footnotes is a purposeful omission so that his readers “should first get through all [their] laughing, without interruption” before looking for further explication (p. iii). This assertion is in itself satirical, mocking the tendency of some authors of papillonnades to add footnotes outlining elements of natural history related to their work in an attempt to foreground a pedagogic agenda. This is the variation of papillonnade text that Andrew O’Malley uses as evidence for the interpolation of middle-class ideology into children’s literature at the expense of folk culture. The example that he chooses, *The Horses’ Levee* (1808) is indeed replete with footnotes and explanations for its child readers. *The Eagle’s Masque*, however, is evidence of the opposite view, a satirisation rather than a support of this type of pedagogy and further attests to the diversity of these texts. Tom Tit’s child reader is drawn into a complicit relationship with the author/narrator who thus become unified in their mocking of authority and learning.

This complicity in *The Eagle’s Masque* is continued in the initial section of the work. The highly self-conscious presence of the narrator in this text is a rare device in the papillonnades where usually the events are presented through a more impersonal narrative technique. Instead, in *The Eagle’s Masque* the narrator continues his interpolation of the child audience into the text through imagined dialogue. For example, the following section shows a clear involvement of audience:

But the BARNACLE best play'd his part at our Masque;
"The Barnacle! How?" - Yes, I thought you would ask:
Why he look'd like himself, to be sure, but to boot.
Might be taken for GANDER, DRAKE, PUFFIN, or COOT; -
So he spar'd the expense of a Masquerade suit. - (p. 9)

The child is given a voice in this extract asking for explanation of the role of the Barnacle ("The Barnacle! How?"). The narrator's reply validates the child's question; "Yes, I thought you would ask" and proceeds to explicate in a representation of conversational tone using expressions such as "why" and "to be sure". "[B]ut to boot" equally is a colloquial expression that further inscribes the chatty register, and again signals a hint of parody of the many pedagogic texts of the era that use the dialogue form in order to impart knowledge and learning to a young audience. Instead here, the asides; "(though you smile at the thing)" and direct address; "Then open your eyes, and I'll show a sight", along with reference to "little friends" (p. 10) and protracted use of the possessive pronoun: "our", "our masque", "our motley community" (p. 9), ensures a continuation of the exchange of humour between (adult) narrator and (child) audience. This is a shared laughter validated and permitted by the narrator who directs the reader towards the comic sights in *The Eagle's Masque*.

However, after this opening, the interpolated child and to a lesser extent the narrator drop away in favour of an imbedded dramatic dialogue between the "merciless Quorum" (p. 13), the Parrot, Magpie, Jay, Chatterer and Daw. The emblematic meaning ascribed to these birds as variously, garrulous, villainous and slanderous foregrounds the bitterness of their diatribe against the other birds and also associates them with gossips at parties in the human sphere. Following a Menippean stylistic, these characters represent these attitudinal states, and the humour is a mix of Hobbesian superiority, always personal and vitriolic, with the witty and very often

skilfully amusing ‘smiling’ satire of Horace. For example:

But tell me the name of yon swaggering youth.”
 (Daw) “*He’s the CRESTED BLACK VULTURE, Miss*”
 (Chatterer) “Crested *forsooth!*
 Such a title is, sure, on all titles a jest; -
 Get a lump on your head - and then swear ‘tis a *crest*
 Then his beak, as I live, is half black and half blue -
 Has he found a fine name for *this* accident too?” (p. 18 original emphasis)

As has been demonstrated in earlier discussion of the ‘Count Boruwilski’ effect, the attacks often focus on physical characteristics of difference such as the crest of the vulture and the colour of his beak. The description also extends later to the bird’s ‘manners’ as he is condemned for eating “carrion”, and on the inflated social pretensions of birds such as “Lady the HOOPPOO” where it is stated “One row of crest-feathers might serve me or you; / But she’s never contented with fewer than two”. (p. 20). What is skilful about such descriptions is that they, like Dorset, present realistic facts about the birds, something which the preface maintains will be the case (“I have not in a single instance, knowingly set down any circumstance relating in a general way, to the persons, lives, and manners, of my feathered Characters, which you may not find to be strictly true” (p. iv)), but unlike in *The Peacock ‘At Home’* the fact that these words are spoken by characters whom the reader is led by the text and narrator to discredit, perhaps also degrades the integrity of this information and thus its impact as a pedagogic device. In this way the narrator further undermines the positioning of these papillonnade texts in O’Malley’s terms as learning presented in a sugar-coated form.

In addition to the tone of the humour becoming much more personal, the presentation of this section in a form resembling a play script increases the emphasis on artificiality and draws even further away from the naturalistic conversational tone

of the narrator/child dialogue. This has the effect of intensifying the alienation of the birds from the created unity between the narrator and the child. As Bakhtin suggests in *The Dialogic Imagination*, the “context embracing another’s word is responsible for its dialogizing background, whose influence can be very great” (1981 p. 358). That is to say the underlying meaning of the detailed dialogue between the members of the “merciless quorum” inserted in this way into the child/narrator space is affected by the proximity of one voice to another. Despite some pleasure taken in the humour derived from puns and sharp observations within the speech, the real humour lies in a satiric critique of the gossips themselves and becomes another element of the social gathering that betrays falsity and vacuity. In a similar way to the technique of ‘free indirect discourse’ used by Jane Austen to influence the reader’s view of different characters without overt statement, here the child reader is encouraged to identify a negative critique of the “merciless quorum” by the dialogic interaction between different sections of the text. The humour in this text, through a mixed Menippean style, is used to allow the child reader to access satirical criticism from a position within the heart of the work. The Juvenalian satire of *The Council of Dogs* demands emotion and ultimately action from its readership, whilst the softer Horatian style of *The Peacock ‘At Home’* or *The Modern Minerva* asks politely and often obliquely through irony, for agreement with the critique. In *The Eagle’s Masque*, however, the satire is presented as a kind of performance where the polyphony of voices with the narrator acting as a guide aids the child in understanding and appreciating what Northrop Frye describes as this most “intellectual” version of satire (1974, p. 310).

In the final account, the papillonnades as a group form a vibrant testimony to the place of humorous texts for children in the early nineteenth century. As I have indicated, if they are discussed at all, papillonnades are often over-simplified in

modern histories or read in isolation from their cultural context. Reading the papillonnades in the context of the early 1800s enhances an understanding of the complexity of ideas surrounding humour, education, society and politics as presented within them. All the evidence shows that these texts were hugely popular with the reading public in this era, and as Goulburn's reference to the "Butterfly Line" illustrates, the underlying theme of the papillonnade also transferred into literature for adults. Furthermore, the papillonnade tradition continued, albeit in a reduced form, into the children's literature of the 1820s and 30s and beyond with texts such as *The Butterfly's Gala* (1820) and *The Peahen at Home* (1840) drawing on the theme of a gathering of creatures. These deceptively simple, "cheerful" texts for children epitomise Bakhtin's dialogic world of cultural, ideological and linguistic exchange, both feeding from and constructing contemporary culture. In this way, dancing snails, card-playing toucans and gossiping Jays, in all their splendid incongruity, each played their part in entertaining and instructing audiences young and old throughout the first decades of the nineteenth century.

My thesis now moves chronologically onwards in the nineteenth century to analyse humour in a new literary genre for children - the literary, or Christmas annuals of the later 1820s and 1830s. This was a mode that, like the papillonnades was also aimed at middle to upper-class children, and which through many individual works making up several publications, aimed to both amuse and educate young readers through their Christmas leisure hours. These publications were however, very varied in tone and often reflected the underlying political and literary ideologies of their editors. In this respect the child reader is once again interpolated into a web of cultural signification that is played out within the conviviality of the festive drawing room.

“Good humour and Glee”: The Festive Space of the Juvenile Christmas Annuals

[...] this forthcoming Annual meets with our hearty approbation. It enters into no competition with others, but takes up an entirely new line, and is expressly addressed to children.

The London Literary Gazette. (1827, p. 785)

On the 6th of December 1827, this excerpt from a review in *The London Literary Gazette*, heralded the arrival of *The Christmas Box*, the first literary annual for children. Edited by the Irish folklorist and antiquarian, Thomas Crofton Croker, this publication promised to bring “good humour and glee” (1828, p. 233) to the Christmas reading of children throughout England. The vocabulary that is used here is significant; Croker’s reference to “good humour” signifies a coalescence with the rise of the concept of amiable humour discussed in relation to the papillonnades in the previous chapter. In regard to the Christmas annuals, however, this connection goes deeper with “good humour and glee” linked to the festive space of the Christmas period and the contemporaneous reappropriation of this season as a time of familial, ‘amiable’ celebration. The ideological positivism behind the amiable humourist mode gains additional impetus through the unification of families and friends in convivial company, fun, games and holiday reading in the leisure time of the Christmas season. Moreover, this connection between humour and Christmas, I argue, has a significant bearing on the juvenile annual as a material entity, where the book itself becomes part of seasonal gift-giving and is a focus for familial reading, as well as reflecting in its pages the festive scenes into which it is interpolated. The connection also deeply influences the writing and reception of the contributions that are collected therein.

This spatial and temporal frame to the juvenile annuals is little explored in contemporary criticism (see below) but has important implications regarding humour for both children and adults in this era. As this chapter will explore, Crofton Croker's publication and the others that followed it, opened up an entirely new mode of literature for children. Like the papillonnades, these literary works were aimed at a middle-class audience, and as such privileged class concerns pertinent to this group with editors constructing their productions to reflect their lives and preoccupations. The juvenile annuals although varied in tone and content, thus share an underlying coda that constructs a comfortable home, a festive fireside, a happy family and industrious yet playful children. Although children from less privileged backgrounds feature within the pages of these productions – primarily as a focus for charity, particularly seasonal charity - they are otherwise excluded from this new literary mode on financial grounds²⁶.

The genesis and reception of the annuals

As a production, *The Christmas Box*, and the others that were published later, followed the track furrowed by the adult literary annuals that had first appeared in 1822 with Rudolph Ackermann's *Forget Me Not*²⁷. As Katherine Harris details in *The Rise of the British Literary Annual*, this new type of text which drew on forms such as

²⁶ Harris, 2015 notes that after the mid 1830s when the literary annuals declined, stock from publishers was sold very cheaply on market stalls and thus could have been accessed from a price point of view by the less affluent (pp. 192-3).

²⁷ Published in 1822 under the subtitle *A Christmas and New Year's Present for 1823*

the almanac, the gift book, the anthology and the miscellany, was something of a cultural and literary phenomenon amongst the middle classes in the 1820s to early 1840s. A “literary and visual genre” that was “both scorned and embraced” in equal measure (Harris, 2015, p. 249), it became for adults intrinsically bound with concepts of class, taste and beauty. Rudolf Ackermann was a fine art publisher of German descent living in London, and had seen the ‘*Taschenbuch*’ (pocket book) grow in popularity in his home country and thus, in his adopted homeland, had combined this concept with new engraving processes to produce a publication that neatly combined illustration and literary production. For these works, authors and poets were often engaged to write contributions around themes depicted in the plates prepared for the annual, and the aesthetic appeal of these productions was extended to beautiful silk bindings, gilt edging and contributions from eminent authors. William Wordsworth, Walter Scott and Maria Edgeworth were just some of the literary luminaries whose work appeared in these adult productions, and in terms of the juvenile annuals, Charles Lamb wrote several entries for *The Christmas Box*, whilst Thomas Hood supplied poems for the *Juvenile Forget Me Not* and James Hogg also wrote high quality contributions for this publication and for the *New Year’s Gift and Juvenile Souvenir*. The books became sought after accessories in middle-class homes, and publishers, eager to revive an industry suffering from the financial downturn of the post-Napoleonic war period, expanded and adapted Ackermann’s format. As Janette Currie states in discussing the poet James Hogg’s contributions to these annuals: “by 1832 there were sixty-three different annuals vying for contributions from established and beginning writers, each one paradoxically claiming a uniqueness while dressing appropriately to the form” (2006, p. xvi).

With this success came also criticism, particularly from those who thought

that the process of writing to a pre-determined theme occluded the individual creative process. The *Edinburgh Literary Journal* in 1831 for example, likened the annuals to the mechanical processes of the industrial revolution, decrying them as “printed and got up by steam” (qtd. in Currie p. xxix). Still others thought the dissemination of literature in this way was merely “miserable and mawkish trash” (*The Quarterly Review*. 1828, p. 99), and that it jeopardised single-authored volumes of supposedly higher literary merit. However, the annuals were also seen as part of a ‘democratisation’ of literature away from the privileged few and into the hands of the expanding middle classes. This increased accessibility was also linked to a dissemination of knowledge into new readership areas, particularly women and children. This was often viewed as a question of pedagogy with the annuals providing these audiences with useful knowledge and access to literature that did not require a classical education to be read and enjoyed. The *New Monthly* foregrounds just this claim for the annuals in 1828, praising them for “enticing [their audience] to read, and study, to the displacement of some frivolous luxury, or childish bauble, and in whom they will awaken thought, and infuse a taste for mental gratification” (p. 469). Such sentiments centre on the annuals as a vehicle for serious and productive literature, however the popularity of the form allowed, over the course of the next few years, a gradual move into annuals that had a specific focus: sport, music, fashion, comedy, and/or that were tailored to a particular audience such as women or children - hence the introduction of the juvenile Christmas annual.

Croker’s *Christmas Box* was closely followed by the *Juvenile Forget Me Not* in 1829 edited by Mrs Anna Hall and in 1830 by the confusingly named *Ackermann’s Juvenile Forget Me Not* that mirrored its adult counterpart, and which eventually merged with the original *Forget Me Not* around 1832. Meanwhile in 1829 Thomas

Roscoe's *The Juvenile Keepsake* and Mrs Alaric Watts' *The New Year's Gift* entered the fray, with Marshall's *Christmas Box* arriving in 1831. *The Juvenile Scrap-Book* was a late entrant in 1836, surviving until 1850. These annuals varied, like their adult counterparts, in tone and content and frequently reflected the background and values of their editors. As I will discuss in this chapter, *The Christmas Box*, for example, draws on Croker's pedigree as an antiquarian with many pieces drawn from myths, legends and folklore, whilst Anna Hall's *Juvenile Forget Me Not* is particularly concerned with privileging a pedagogic agenda. Accurate sales data for the juvenile annuals is difficult to ascertain clearly, however in a letter to James Crossley in 1828 Croker claimed "*The Christmas Box* sells admirably; we have already exceeded 2000" - a respectable amount for a new children's publication (Croker qtd. in Ellis, 1911, p.170). Moreover, the longevity of some of these productions for children as well as frequent reviews of these annuals in well-known publications such as *The Monthly Review*, *The Edinburgh Literary Journal* and many others, testify to the reach and popularity of the juvenile annuals. Equally, whilst the remit of this chapter is specifically those annuals written for children, it should not go unremarked that the majority of the many annuals that appeared from the mid 1820s to the 1840s were aimed at a family market. As Harris states:

Like many printed materials in the early nineteenth century, annuals were marketed as 'wholesome literature' for the entire family that moved beyond the quick entertainment of a broadside or daily (2015, p. 38).

Content within these annuals written for adults was thus often accessed by children either individually, such as in the example of the young aristocrat who sat "all night in the drawing room, studying [Thomas Hood's] comic annual"²⁸, and through the group

²⁸ The youngster was a member of the Fitzwilliam family who were visiting the family of Harriet,

(family) reading that was often encouraged in prefaces and reviews. For example, *The Monthly Review* in 1828 discusses precisely this cross-over audience, stating:

These works [...] find their way to almost every educated mind among the growing generations, and are calculated from the beauty of their external appearance, as well as from their attractive contents, to excite more than a common degree of curiosity, and to exercise, perhaps, more than an ordinary portion of influence (1828, p. 378).

In addition, reviews and other anecdotal evidence suggest that conversely the juvenile annuals were often gifted to families and enjoyed by adults as well as children. This is made clear in a review of Croker's 1828 *The Christmas Box*, where the writer advises his adult readers to read the publication, and after they have "laughed over it", to "present it to one of [their] juvenile friends" (*The Monthly Review*, 1828, p. 78).

Existing scholarship

Negative comments levelled at the Christmas annuals during the early part of the nineteenth century have often been replicated in scholarship, with the annual generally seen at best as a minor and trifling form of literature. Only in the last fifteen years have the Christmas annuals been explored in their own right as a vital component of popular culture and as a valid format for the works of many well and lesser-known poets. The rise of scholarship surrounding the Christmas annuals has particularly been drawn from a rethinking of the female canon of romantic-era writers, many of whom contributed to the annuals, and there has likewise been a (continuing) resurgence in works relating to the woman's role as editor and the

Countess of Granville around 1835. See Levenson Gower, 1894, p. 192. Accessed through *The Reading Experience Database*: http://www.open.ac.uk/Arts/reading/IJK/record_details.php?id=26950, accessed: 12 May 2014

construction of femininity in these productions (Harris, 2005; Feldman, 2006).

Despite this valuable work, the juvenile annuals have rarely benefitted from this boom in critical attention. Katherine Harris is one of the most prominent scholars of the literary annuals, yet in her monograph she gives the juvenile annuals only a passing mention. In her otherwise meticulous study, she states rather dismissively that “the juvenile annuals made a spotty appearance on the market from 1828 to 1835” concluding that “[a]pparently the youth of England were in further need of instruction and moral guidance than what was offered in the typical literary annual” (2015, p. 154). Rather confusingly, she does not mention Crofton Croker’s work, preferring instead to start the trajectory of the juvenile annuals with Mrs Watts’ *New Year’s Gift* that appeared the same year as *The Christmas Box*. Likewise, she also assumes, in line with the all-too pervasive narrative of the history of children’s literature, that the content of these annuals adheres to a pedagogic and moralistic agenda. As my following discussion will show this is far from always the case. Some scholarship has also been undertaken on specific authors whose work appeared in juvenile annuals; Jannette Currie’s work on James Hogg for his *Collected Works* is one such example. Occasionally, pieces from the juvenile annuals have also been explored to foreground wider themes and studies; Sara Lodge’s monograph on Thomas Hood for example, explores Theodore Hook’s poem ‘Cautionary Verses’, originally published in *The Christmas Box* of 1828. Overall however, little work has been undertaken on this sub-genre and even less has been written on the importance and relationship of these productions to the children’s book market and to popular culture.

The existing scholarship on annuals for an adult audience are also rarely concerned with the temporal context of the Christmas period in which they were produced. Harris’ work connects the seasonality of these annuals only with the

historically entrenched date of almanac printing in November and Ackermann's desire that "annuals would become part of, if not the cause for widespread holiday exchanges of literary materials that mimicked the long-standing practice of Almanac Day" (2015, p. 36). Christmas, in the main, appears important to the adult annuals only in terms of the increased leisure time that the season offered for reading, and the economic possibilities of the annual as gift. Tara Moore's *Victorian Christmas in Print* (2009), which has a chapter devoted to early (pre-Victorian) Christmas books, supports this point. This critic makes the generalised assertion that due to the desire of publishers to prolong the sales period outside the Christmas period, "literary annuals almost never made direct reference to the midwinter holiday between their covers" (2009, p. 9). Whilst acknowledging Moore's excellent analysis of the construction of Christmas in the early nineteenth-century, this chapter contends that in regard to the juvenile annuals the opposite is true. In the juvenile annuals, Christmas, in many of the works, is a recurring motif that specifically places these productions within a seasonal context. Moreover, the temporal and spatial construction of this festive period both within and outside of the annuals is critical to the engagement of this new genre with the humorous mode and with play and learning for children.

The 'Season of Mirth'

In *Victorian Christmas in Print*, Tara Moore asserts that due in large part to the changing economic and social landscape of England, the popularity of Yuletide celebrations waned during the eighteenth century. She goes on to describe how by the early nineteenth century there was an attempt to revive the concept of Christmas by

periodical writers such as Leigh Hunt and others who were concerned that the festival might be lost forever:

[...] the evidence clearly points to a lapse in Christmas celebration among fashionable quarters, in part because of the changes social hierarchies and baronial architecture faced. Industrialization shortened the length of the Christmas holiday, and the eighteenth century saw leaders of fashion turning away from Christmas. By the late eighteenth century, a new attitude about the holiday guided the fashionable back to Christmas, causing nostalgic remarks like those by Hunt's correspondent, Irving and others interested in seeing Christmas reborn out of the ashes. (2009, pp. 11-12)

This revitalisation of the holiday period testifies to the anxieties that many writers demonstrated in this period concerning constraints over leisure time and the changing social landscape of England, a point that Lodge supports in her book on Thomas Hood (2007). Particularly within periodical writing from figures such as Leigh Hunt and Charles Lamb and others, Christmas is often constructed as a time for family, leisure and good cheer in contrast to a perceived disintegration of society brought about by social and industrial upheaval. In 'A Few Words on Christmas' in *The London Magazine* of 1822, for example. Lamb describes the season as follows:

And what is Christmas? Why, it's the happiest time of the year. It is the season of mirth and cold weather. It is the time when Christmas-boxes and jokes are given: when mistletoe and red-berried laurel, and soups and sliding, and school-boys prevail; when the country is illuminated by fires and bright faces; and the town is radiant with laughing children (p. 495)

Lamb's description is nostalgic and idealised and the writer domesticates and urbanises Elizabethan and medieval descriptions of feudal, seasonal celebrations to privilege children, play and, importantly, good cheer and enjoyment. The Christmas of the past with its often-raucous saturnalian carnival celebrations is reappraised by Lamb to include freedom, fun and enjoyment, but to exclude the kind of misrule and

excess often associated with such celebrations. This is not the world-turned-upside-down of the carnival that Bakhtin describes in *Rabelais and his World*, but it does relate to the concept of the Christmas space as a privileged time where entertainment and laughter are the ascendant modes. For Bakhtin carnival is “always essentially related to time, either to the recurrence of an event in the natural (cosmic) cycle, or to biological or historic timeliness” (1984, p. 9) and he specifically connects the feast to seasonal time, to “Paschal” or “Christmas laughter” (p. 14). The nostalgic elements of Lamb’s writing can also be linked to Bakhtin’s description of how the feast “looked back at the past and used the past to consecrate the present” (p. 9). As Moore suggests this use of nostalgia is key to a widespread attempt from the early nineteenth-century onwards to reclaim past temporal festivities in order to mitigate a perceived threat from increasing industrialisation and urbanisation. It is also the key-motivating factor in the *Every-Day Book* edited by William Hone in 1825/6 in which the author ‘collects’ reminiscences and information about customs and traditions in England throughout the year. Hone’s depiction of Christmas, particularly in regard to Christmas laughter is very similar to that of Charles Lamb and Leigh Hunt and I will return to this work in my following analysis. This connection with medieval Carnival in the literature linked to the Christmas season is made explicit in the opening contribution to *The Christmas Box* of 1829.



Fig. 3.1. Brooke, W.H. 'The Lord of Misrule'. *The Christmas Box*. Ed. Thomas Crofton Croker, 1829, p. 1.

Headed by a jovial image by W. H. Brooke depicting a medieval 'Lord of Misrule' (Fig. 3.1), this long prose article draws specifically on the projection of a Christmas past onto Christmas present as detailed above and which can be read as an example of Raymond Williams' concept of 'residual' culture which "has been effectively formed in the past, but [which] is still active in the cultural process [...] as an effective element of the present" (1977, p. 122). Such examples of residual culture tend to occur, according to Williams, when "the dominant culture neglects, undervalues, opposes, represses or even cannot recognize" elements that are of importance to particular sections of society (p. 123). As an antidote to increasing industrialisation, changing class structures and Enlightenment 'progress', Christmas becomes a sanctified locus of enjoyment within a recognisable residue. Such elements were iterated and reiterated in the burgeoning periodical and annual culture throughout the early decades of the 1800s. This piece in Croker's annual positions a quotation from the publication *The World* alongside the image of the 'Lord of Misrule' to emphasise

the connection between past and present. This phrase was also replicated in other weekly and monthly publications such as *Saturday Night* (1824) as the epitome of the season, and foregrounds humour, merriment, feasting and enjoyment over the mundane world of work. It commences:

Our ancestors considered Christmas in the double light of a holy commemoration and a cheerful festival; and accordingly distinguished it by devotion, by vacation from business, by merriment, and hospitality. They seemed eagerly bent to make themselves and everybody about them happy.”
(*The World* qtd. in *The Christmas Box*, 1829, p. 1)

Of course this simplifies and conflates an essentially unknowable experience of Christmas into a conveniently packaged, nostalgic event. As Williams states, the “actively residual” becomes incorporated into present culture by a process of “reinterpretation, dilution, projection, [and] discriminating inclusion and exclusion” (p. 123). The seasonal residual is thus wholly “selective” (p. 123), and in this case entirely erases any suggestion of excess and misrule. Croker, himself an active participant in reliving past Christmas traditions, wholeheartedly embraces this idea. He tells his young readership that he wishes to congratulate them on the “arrival of the welcome season which brings with it holidays, sports and feasting” (1829, p. 2) and he then goes on to reminisce about his own memories of the onset of the Christmas holidays and their link with happiness and enjoyment:

We still possess a lively remembrance of our own joy on the approach of that happy time when mince pies and merriment succeeded the half year’s pilgrimage through grammars, dictionaries, copy books, and all the other torments as we then thought them, before we were convinced of their full benefit. (1829, p. 2)

This rejection of the tropes of traditional education is further emphasised later on in *The Christmas Box* when another image humorously emphasises discarded school

books and pens as children run euphorically towards a huge Christmas pudding carried by a struggling servant (Fig. 3.2).



Fig. 3.2 Brooke, W.H. 'Address to a Plum Pudding'. *The Christmas Box*. Ed. Thomas Crofton Croker, 1829, p. 12

The exaggeration of the size of the foodstuff, in a similar manner to the size of the 'Lord of Misrule' which physically dominates the image, produces a degree of light-hearted caricature regarding the features of Christmas that serves to foreground amusement and play over work and learning. This hyperbolic image is similar to the descriptions of Christmas in Hone's *Everyday Book* that often focus on the feasting and food that accompanies seasonal festivity. For example, Mr Brand's entry on 'Christmas Dinner' gives a verbal impression of a sumptuous dinner:

In Christmas holidays, the tables were all spread from the first to the last; the sirloins of beef, the minced pies, the *plumb porridge*, the capons, turkeys, geese, and plum-puddings, were all brought upon the board: every one ate heartily, and was welcome (1826, p. 820).

Likewise, in the report of the twelfth night festivities in January, Hone quotes the *Monthly Review's* description of the cake and accompanying feast which is depicted in the same hyperbolic nature as Brooke's illustration. It is:

[...] an acre of cake spread out—the sweet frost covering the rich earth below— studded all over with glittering flowers, like ice-plants, and red and green knots of sweetmeat, and hollow yellow crusted crowns, and kings and queens, and their paraphernalia. I delight to see [a] score of happy children sitting huddled all round the dainty fare, eyeing the cake and each other, with faces sunny enough to thaw the white snow” (1826, p. 26).

Such descriptions are typical of a carnivalesque mode of representation where, as Bakhtin confirms: “one of the oldest forms of hyperbolic grotesque was the exaggerated size of foodstuffs” (1984, p. 184). The “acre of cake” evokes a physical pleasure evidenced by the “happy children” with “sunny” faces gathered around the pudding. Brooke’s drawing likewise depicts joyful children delighting in the exaggerated size of the cook’s offering. Bakhtin states that, “hyperboles of food parallel the most ancient hyperboles of belly, mouth and phallus” (p. 184), and these descriptions retain the physicality of the carnival but the humour, like the ‘selective’ interpretation of the Lord of Misrule, is romanticised and domesticated, associated with a table well-stocked with food in a wealthy household where all are welcome and everyone is satiated in merry conviviality.

As the decade progressed, the figure of the schoolboy returning from his place of education for the Christmas holidays became a prominent trope in these literary depictions of the season both within and outside of the Christmas annuals. Croker’s contrast between the joy of the holiday season and the drudgery of traditional scholastic pedagogy, drawing from constructions of Christmas in the periodicals, is reinforced time and again in the juvenile annuals and other literature, and becomes vital in constructing a pseudo-carnival space for Christmas. Thomas Hood’s sonnet in the *Comic Annual* of 1832 for example, uses the return for the holidays to emphasise strongly just this temporary liberation from ‘real life’ and (school) work that the Christmas season has the ability to produce:

Along the Woodford road there comes a noise
Of wheels, and Mr. Rounding's neat post-chaise
Struggles along, drawn by a pair of bays,
With Reverend Mr. Crow and six small boys,
Who ever and anon declare their joys
With trumping horns and juvenile huzzas,
At going home to spend their Christmas days,
And changing learning's pains for pleasure's toys.
Six weeks elapse, and down the Woodford way
A heavy coach drags six more heavy souls,
But no glad urchins shout, no trumpets bray.
The carriage makes a halt, the gate-bell tolls.
And little boys walk in as dull and mum
As six new scholars to the Deaf and Dumb! (1832, p. 162)

The tight constraint of the sonnet form is used for the first seven lines to emphasise the freedom and happiness of the excited return of the schoolboys for the holidays. The volta at line nine allows Hood to show the reader the gap which is Christmas, a before and after picture, a space free of “learning’s pains” as he terms it and which emphasises the contrast between work/leisure and the happy time of Christmas and the drudgery of school. Hood uses sound to emphasise this contrast; the noise of the coach wheels, the “huzzas”, the “trumping horns” are replaced by the negatives in the second half of the sonnet which nullify the earlier sounds, with Hood positioning the boys as “dull and mum”. The lack of voice of the children here also serves to undermine their subjectivity. If speech is the entry ticket into individual subjecthood as psychoanalytic theory would suggest, then the lack of speech of the boys upon returning to school reduces them to automata. This can be understood as a reflection of Hood’s view of traditional educational establishments in a general sense, but it also has important ramifications for the Christmas space that I will explore fully in the following sections. The individual autonomy of the child as reader is frequently privileged in the annuals as the child navigates the humour contained within the productions. It also links strongly with the concept of the medieval carnival where the

powerless could become powerful for a designated amount of time. Here the child, at least for the Christmas break, can slip off the yoke of “learning’s pains” and embrace pleasure and fun.

In this construction of the Christmas space, Bakhtin’s concept of the physical medieval carnival as a way in which humour was used to overturn power relations and as a kind of relief valve for the high spirits of the common people also connects to a theory of humour that would enter the philosophical debate in the later part of the nineteenth century. The idea that humour was a psychological and physical release from tension was at the centre of Alexander Bain’s theory of humour in his work, *The Emotions and The Will* (1859). In this text he uses the image of a child leaving school to demonstrate just this concept, stating that when relieved from some kind of serious situation a “rebound of hilarity ensues, as is the case of children set free from school” (1865, p. 250). Bain is here describing the “perpetual contrast” (p. 251) in life of seriousness and the occasional relief from this gravity; however, the image of the child Bain uses here is echoed in these descriptions of young people freed from the strictures of education. Such children are everywhere in early nineteenth-century constructions of Christmas, for example, Hone’s *Everyday Book* quotes Leigh Hunt’s description of Christmas that begins:

One of the most pleasing sights at this festive season is the group of boys and girls returned from school. Go where you will, a cluster of their joyous chubby faces present themselves to our notice. (1826, p. 804)

Likewise, the concept of the Christmas period as what the play theorist Johan Huizinga terms a “marked off” space (1955, p. 10), is also evident in *The Book of Christmas* by Thomas Hervey (1835), illustrated by Robert Seymour. In a visual echo of Hood’s sonnet, (Fig. 3.3) the book ends with the poignant picture of boys returning

to school:



Fig. 3.3. Seymour, Robert. 'Returning to School'. *The Book of Christmas* (1836) Thomas Hervey, 1888, p. 355

The weather has reverted to dreary and the faces are sad. The accompanying text specifically speaks about the ending of the Christmas holidays as a cessation of magic: “Our Revels now are ended; and our Christmas prince must abdicate” (1888, p. 355). The hackney carriage looms almost spectre-like on the periphery of the schoolboy’s vision and now it appears fully:

And, behold! at the gloomy gate a hackney coach! (more like a mourning coach!)—
Black Monday, visible in all its appointments, and *black Friday*, looking blacker than ever, this black Monday, frowning from its foot-board!
And lo! through its windows, just caught in the distance, the last flutter of the coat-tails of old Father Christmas!—
Our Revels are, indeed, ended! (pp. 355-6)

The language of this piece; the reference to “revels” and to the abdication of a “Christmas prince” evokes the spirit of the carnival which exists in a prescribed place and timeframe. It also gives a nod to the ‘containability’ of these joyous activities. The revels are “ended”, as in Hood’s poem, the children are returning to school and the weather reflects the emotional heaviness of the participants in contrast to the joy

of the revelry of Christmas. Hervey, Hood, Croker and others have inscribed the Christmas period as a reclaimed carnival time, an essentially privileged space, particularly for children. Such a theme is also evident in a print drawn by George Cruikshank around 1826 as a sequence of illustrations entitled 'Holiday Scenes'. This print is called 'At Home in the Nursery, or. The Master and Misses Twoshoes Christmas Party', and was also reissued in 1835 as part of *Cruikshankiana*. The illustration (Fig. 3.4) depicts fourteen children of varying ages enjoying themselves in rather raucous fashion in what is presumably a nursery space.



Fig. 3.4 Cruikshank, George. 'At Home' in the Nursery; or, The Masters and Misses Twoshoes Christmas Party'. In *Holiday Scenes*. London: S. Knight, 1826?

Children play with toy soldiers in the foreground whilst two boys standing on a piece of furniture enact a play battle in the background. A child has made a horse and carriage out of furniture and another rides joyously on a rocking horse. In the midst of

the revelry a nurse holds a baby whilst small girls dance around her and a servant appears at the doorway carrying jellies and cake. In a coalescence with Brooke's illustration for *The Christmas Box*, a grammar book lies discarded on the floor at the front of the picture whilst an image of Dr Syntax looks down on the rejoicing from the wall. Even the title with its reference to Masters and Misses Twoshoes evokes John Newbury's famous moral tale *Goody Two Shoes* (1765). The picture partakes of the general carnivalesque theme in regard to children and the Christmas season that I have discussed in terms of Croker, Hone and Seymour. Learning and moral teaching are discarded in favour of the play and the humour of the saturnalia. The phrase 'At Home' in the title references the 'at homes' of the papillonnades: the balls, parties and feasting connected with these texts that I have discussed in the previous chapter. This is a further linking of children and the festive season with the concept of entertaining literature, but it also locates the fun within a domestic space, safely 'at home' in other words, so that the riotous freedoms enjoyed by the children in this Cruikshank's picture are held at bay behind the nursery door.

The specificity of this locale is further reflected in frequent depiction of festivities in spaces that translate the temporality of the season into an actual physical space. Croker's 'Old Christmas' refers to seasonal celebrations taking place in a "snug country house" which "echo[es] with laughter" (1829, p. 2), whilst in the *New Year's Gift and Juvenile Souvenir* of 1833 the reader is presented with a story framed in the setting of Christmas in another country house where "a merry party of children were assembled at play" and the "old hall [...] resounded to the shouts of laughter and the clatter of rushing feet, as hunt the slipper, blind man's bluff, and other noisy games, by turns, excited the mirth of the happy company" (1833, pp. 53-54). Another entry in the *New Year's Gift* of 1831, 'The First Adventure of a Sailor', is constructed

as a tale told around the Christmas fireside. Instead of ‘once-upon-a-time’ we find “One Christmas evening, an old man sat in a great armchair, close to a bright fire....” (1831, p. 57). These baronial settings reflect the relative affluence of their target audience, and are moreover, an attempt to fix through literature a gradually eroding class system through a recapture of the essence of a feudal environment where whole villages would gather for seasonal festivities at the great hall. In addition, they integrate a domestic setting into the construction of Christmas that begins to place family and the home environment at the centre of the season. Tara Moore suggests the domestication of Christmas into the home “remained the central focus for Christmas nostalgia”. She goes on to explain:

home in the Christmas narrative often functioned as an allegory for the national predicament: the loss of citizens to enticement abroad and the financial decay of a society in desperate need of reform (2009, p. 26).

Children and the family became bound up in this Christmas space, a time of year with the quasi-magical ability to dispel anxiety and monotony through good humour and familial conviviality - sentiments that still pervade today.

Just as significantly, this concept of Christmas as a special space interpolated into the smaller confines of a familial environment can be used as a metaphor to describe the juvenile annuals themselves which, through their introductions, also frame themselves both metaphorically and as material objects as a marked out space where play and amusement can ensue. The juvenile annuals, seemingly much more than those aimed at an adult audience, utilise the idea of Christmas as a locus that appears to allow special dispensation for fun and amusement for children. There is, however, a tacit anxiety within such a reading that humour for children still had somehow to be ‘sanctified’, that there must be a special reason to replace learning

with fun (or at least tip the balance in its favour). As I have outlined in my introduction, the connection of learning and play had been a common and well-integrated concept since John Locke's work *Some Thoughts Concerning Education* (1693), yet humour for children remained contentious, with satire, cruel humour and, as I shall illustrate, punning, particularly problematic. The temporal link of Christmas with the commodity status of the juvenile annuals themselves, however, was one way in which it was possible for humour to be justified for a juvenile audience. In addition, this licencing and reclamation of the carnival space within the material form of the juvenile annual can also be read through the lens of Immanuel Kant's view of humour. Although in his *Critique of Judgement* (1790) Kant is uncomfortable with the notion of grotesque or low humour in that such modes contradict his notions of beauty, taste and reason, as Ben Taylor points out, there is a role for a Kantian concept of humour within the middle-class drawing room. Amongst the arts that according to Kant man finds pleasant is:

[...] the art of telling stories in an entertaining way, of starting the company in frank and lively conversation, or raising them by jest and laugh to a certain pitch of merriment (Kant, qtd. in Taylor 1995, p. 137).

As Taylor terms it, this quotation is a way of replacing “the grotesque humour of the carnivalesque feast [...] [with] a genteel form of humorous table talk” (p. 137). The hyperbolic ciphers of the medieval feasting already discussed as present in W. H. Brooke's illustrations to Croker's annual are absent and only the ‘residue’ of the carnival feast survives within the conviviality of the Christmas dinner table and within the family reading of the annual. The carnival space of Christmas inscribed these productions with a ‘licence’ for fun.

‘Licenced’ humour in the juvenile Christmas annuals

In his 1987 work on paratexts, *Paratexts: Threshold of Interpretation*, the theorist Gerard Genette asserts that the preface to a work of literature is “a zone not only of transition but also of transaction” (1987, p. 2). That is, the preface provides a space of shift from one point in the text to another and is also a site of dialogue between the author (or in the case of the Christmas annuals, the editor) and the reader. It expresses the editor’s desire to have the text read as they would like it to be read, placing it within the correct context and drawing attention to any salient points to which they would like their audience to pay particular attention. Genette asserts that prefaces frequently reinforce the perceived “moral usefulness” of the text (p. 199). Although of course, there is no guarantee that the preface will be read at all, many of the editors of the juvenile Christmas annuals use the preface explicitly to connect their literary production with the temporal space of Christmas, drawing on the construction of Yuletide humour and entertainment that I have discussed above. Here, for example, is the preface by Anna Maria Hall to the 1829 *Juvenile Forget Me Not*:

The season of the year, in which nature presents her gloomiest aspect, is, in our happy country, the period when friends and families usually meet in social intercourse and exchange pledges of affection. To produce a Volume for Youth that should answer this delightful purpose, and so blend instruction with amusement, as to make the heart cheerful while the mind was improved, has been the object of the Editor and Publishers of the *Juvenile Forget Me Not*. (p. ii)

Likewise, John Marshall’s *Christmas Box* of 1832 states in the preface that the editor has collected for his child readers “a fresh fund of that admirable combination, instruction blended with amusement - well calculated to neutralize the contagion of

lowering skies, and convert the long hours of a winter's evening into a "midsummer night's dream" (p. iii). The language of both these prefaces imbue the proceeding pages with a quasi-magical quality that has the power to "neutralize the contagion of lowering skies" or "make the heart cheerful" during nature's "gloomiest aspect". The prefaces thus turn the material production of the annuals themselves into a site of Christmas cheer that draws on carnival yuletide celebrations and recalibrate this traditional time of fun and celebration to include the reading of the annuals' contents. In this seasonal event the annual functions as metonymy, as a recurring trope.

The transactional space of these prefaces, however, also predicate certain checks and balances to the fun and entertainment of the Christmas period. Speaking of course to child readers and their parents, the prefaces quoted above assert that the increased leisure time of the Christmas period, the release from traditional schooling could and should also be treated as a time when learning can simultaneously be maintained. The Christmas cheer of the juvenile annuals is not ungoverned or unlimited, but instead is appropriated to ensure the child reader will be entertained and edified by the annual's content. These transactional prefaces assert what Katherine Harris in her discussion of the adult annuals calls "editorial control of reading practices" (2015, p. 591) The regulation of the annuals' contents is not just a question of what pieces are included or left out by the editor, but also refers to the way in which the editor wishes the production to be approached by both children and parents as set out in the preface. Such editorial control becomes extremely important when analysing these productions for a juvenile audience; there are many occasions in the prefaces to the juvenile annuals where there seems to be an anxious desire to ensure that the professed entertaining aspects of some of the contents are not misinterpreted as lacking edification. Such aspects reiterate the need to legitimise the

use of humour for children; a fact evidenced in the 1830 *Juvenile Forget-Me-Not* for example, when Anna Maria Hall uses the preface to wish her readers “a merry Christmas and a happy new year”, and then goes on to say:

I entreat them [her readership] recollect, that amusement is, at least, useless, if it do [sic] not contribute to information - and that the mind and heart may be improved even during the gayest moment (p. iv).

This view that humour was essentially ‘non-productive’ and thus, as Hall suggests “useless” without a pedagogic end, was widespread in the early nineteenth century, particularly in regard to children. Thus even though the contemporary construction of Christmas allowed for some liberty from learning, laughter in itself was still considered a risky business. Additionally, there is an implicit anxiety in Hall’s assertion that amusement without instruction might become dangerous for the individual: a surfeit of emotions could over-rule the child’s reason. Thus whilst asserting a licence to have fun through the temporality of Christmas, the editors are quick to ensure that such amusements are carefully controlled.

Perhaps then, it is telling that in the opening piece of Croker’s *Christmas Box*, ‘Old Christmas’ the ‘Lord of Misrule’ is the substantive image of this section. With the ability to both direct and to cease the carnival, this figure exemplifies, as Indira Ghose states in her discussion of the fool in medieval carnival, “control by authority as well as its reverse, an escape from control” (2002, p. 35). Indeed, in ‘Old Christmas’ Croker is at pains to explain to his juvenile audience, after visiting a lively recount of mumming, carol-singing and wassailing, that such events were always carefully regulated. “Let it not, however, be thought that the Christmas games were without any order or government” he states (1829, p. 8), before describing the role of the Lord of Misrule in detail and ending with a vehement statement of the cessation of

carnival fun: “but these amusements at last grew, like boys’ play, so riotous, that they very properly were suppressed” (p. 9). Just like the medieval carnival, these annuals have what Ghose terms a “built-in safeguard [...] that is temporality” (p. 44). Just as Christmas becomes a licenced space for an element of seasonal laughter and enjoyment, so the annuals themselves, through their carefully worded prefaces, are often constructed as a ‘safe’ place for children to experience a particular type of good cheer which has the added advantage of simultaneously aiding their edification.

However, despite the express desire of many editors to retain control of the humour in these annuals, in Thomas Crofton Croker’s introduction to the first Christmas annual, *The Christmas Box*, there is a cognisance that the regulation of reading and the way that particular pieces are interpreted depends very much on the individual reader. This piece of writing emphasises that juvenile audiences, like adults, have the ability to make autonomous choices over their reading despite the best legislative efforts of the editors. Writing about the content of his annual, Croker states in his preface:

Our book consists of a great variety of pieces, some more entertaining, some more instructive than others. We have thus endeavoured to provide for the entertainment of readers of different dispositions, and to make it like a museum, where one person admires, perhaps, a collection of birds, another a set of medals, a third a beautiful statue or painting, according to the inclinations of each. (1828, p. xi).

Cleverly Croker imbues this passage with an appearance of learning, of a ‘useful’ end to his production. Like a visit to a museum his child reader can peruse what may interest him or her and gain a degree of learning from the experience. The idea of an annual like a museum may well appeal to any parents anxious to know that their child’s Christmas leisure time will be filled usefully, but Croker also expresses here the idea of the autonomy of readers to be selective about their reading choices. He

accepts that their choices will be their own, that individual tastes may well apply, and importantly he encourages the idea of playing with his production. The annual-as-museum, then becomes a dynamic rather than a monolithic entity, subject to playful and wilful reconstitution. It becomes as Bakhtin states in his discussion of the dialogic text in his essay ‘Discourse in the Novel’, an “active participant in social dialogue” (1981, p. 276). It also links strongly to the carnival idea of protean change that, according to Bakhtin, was “opposed to all that was ready-made and completed” and “demanded ever changing, playful, undefined forms” (1984, p. 11). Readers of *The Christmas Box* turn the annual into something new through their own reading choices. Although Croker in his preface describes a visit to an actual museum by his child readers – a visit that revolves around the visual, around looking at exhibits - he also constructs his annual as a kind of ‘museum of contributions’, as a repository to be interrogated by his young readers according to their tastes. Indeed there are several examples in this period where the concept of a museum takes on this idea of an archive, for example, *The Entertaining Museum or Monthly Companion* (1815)²⁹, the periodical the *Museum of Foreign Literature and Science* (1822), which again is a collection of varied works, and the *Universal Songster or Museum of Mirth* (1826), a text which ‘collects’ “ancient and modern songs” to prevent these texts “being lost in the overwhelming flood of time” (p. v). In this way Croker’s annual both engages with an ‘antiquarian’ view of the past as something to be preserved and protected but also embraces his ‘collection’ as something to be used by his readers to form new meanings in the present.

²⁹ The full subtitle alludes to the compendium nature of the contents: “*comprising Arts & Sciences, History, Biography, Criticism, Poetry, Manners, Domestic Events, Amusing Anecdotes, Essays, Tales etc. Forming a complete Pocket Library of Information in every department of useful and polite Literature ‘Utile et Dulce’ From Grave to Gay from lively to Severe*”

What is also unusual about Croker's preface is the way in which the editor echoes the conviviality of the Christmas period by constructing his own persona as a kindly friend offering advice to his readership rather than an editor imposing his views on his audience. Unlike many other prefaces to the juvenile annuals where the figure of the editor looms large over his readership, such as in *Marshall's Christmas Box* where "the editor presents himself again to his young friends" (1832, p. v), here Croker uses the pronoun "we" to emphasise the collaborative effort of himself and his contributors. In a similar way to the interaction between adult narrator and child reader in *The Eagle's Masque*, Croker draws his audience into the text through asides such as "we will not detain them [his child audience] long, as we are pretty sure they would not thank us if we did", and ends with the assertion that he must conclude as "we doubt not our young friends are impatient to get over the preface" (p. xii). In Marshall's preface the stories within the annual are presented to the readership as a 'fait accompli'; they have been "*collected* for them", and the stories are "*well calculated* to neutralise the contagion of lowering skies" with his contributors taking "an evident delight in teaching the young to think and feel correctly" (p. v. emphasis added). In Croker's preface, in contrast, the editor explains the genesis of individual works, why they have been chosen specifically for the annual and why they might appeal to a juvenile audience. Mr Lockhart's history of the Napoleonic war, for example, is described as being "intelligible and interesting to you" unlike the histories written for an adult audience "which most young readers would neither like nor understand" as they are primarily written for an audience "familiar with such writings" (p. x/xi). It is a construction that retains a real sense of a juvenile audience even though the perceived projection of worthy learning onto the preface may also appeal to parents.

The same attribution of agency to the child reader rather than control from the editor also extends to many of the individual contributions to *The Christmas Box*. On many occasions specific pieces, or the positioning by the editor of particular pieces within the volume shapes play and encourages the child reader to actively engage in his or her own meaning making. These ludic qualities within the work itself supplements the humour of individual contributions. As Harris remarks about the adult annuals, “the annual’s array of contents encourages fragmented and fractured looking by its readers” (2015, p. 990). Like the scrap booking decoupage that was a hallmark of the 1820s and beyond, such language represents a kind of pedagogy that attributes considerable agency to the child reader³⁰. It is the polar opposite of the rote learning of the schoolroom and fits very well with the trope of the overturning of formal schooling during the holidays. Importantly, in Croker’s preface humour is arguably granted a more privileged position than in the other juvenile annuals. Yet even within these companion titles, amusement is often a key contributor to the pages of the work. The prefaces set up the context of the annuals as participants in a cheerful Christmas community that takes the positive elements of medieval carnival and moulds this joyfulness into a contemporary ‘licensed’ space where humour can be safely enjoyed by children. The humour sanctioned here is, however, of a certain type, and the next section explores the exact nature and the positive and negatives of this “generous and cheerful” amusement (Lamb, 1822, p. 497)

³⁰ Maidment, 2007 links adult scrapbooking in the early 1800s with the prevalence of the amiable humourist mode in print culture and the desire of many consumers to produce a personal and original ‘archive’ out of the widely available published, humorous ‘scraps’.

‘Good humour’ as unification; ‘good humour’ as stultification

The concept of ‘good’ or ‘amiable’ humour utilised the philosophical shift regarding the nature of mankind and the role of reason in regulating human behaviour as the impetus for a comic mode that had the power to unite both young and old and bring relief from the mundane nature of the everyday. Although one can argue as Simon Dickie has done in his study on cruel humour that this caesura is not quite as clear cut as Stuart Tave in the *Amiable Humorist* might indicate³¹, there is considerable evidence to point to a philosophical shift with regard to the comic mode and a more positive appraisal of man’s connection with laughter. This is a concept supported from the angle of visual culture by Maidment who references an increased “public awareness of a comic art in which satire was becoming less grotesque, more good humoured and increasingly focused on the quotidian affairs of the middling and lower classes” (2013, p. 32).

Attitudes to the child, likewise, follow a similar pattern. A view that children were innately sinful and required saving from their own iniquity was challenged in Enlightenment thinking with a positive embracing of the figure of the child as a symbol of the possibilities of societal perfectibility through rational knowledge and education. This rejection of inherent juvenile sinfulness goes hand in hand with a downgrading of superior modes of humour particularly those involving derision and ridicule. The review in *The London* discussed in Chapter 2 that illustrates a rejection of satire for children, also draws on Lockean, associationist philosophy to illustrate

³¹ See Dickie, 2011. Gatrell 2006 also identifies a paradox between what is written about humour in polite, literary circles and the reality of the lewd and often crude comedy that circulated in print culture within these circles. With particular reference to the stage, Tonnies, 2002, likewise comments upon a discrepancy between theory and practice (see chapter 5)

the dangers of negative influences on the child: “[h]is [the child’s] character is gradually formed under the repeated impressions made by which his thoughts and fancy are brought into contact” (1820, p. 159). Exposure to the satiric mode with its “adult concerns” (p. 159) therefore equals a child in peril.

The politics and ideology that lie behind the editorial in *The London* are complex and nuanced, with much of the periodical press, despite their seeming preference for ‘innocent’ humour in children’s literature were themselves often engaged in “rancorous personal attack” (Parker, 2000, p. 4)³². Yet, the Christmas annual mode in general actively promoted benevolent humour over a ‘superior’ mode, and within the juvenile Christmas annuals the distinction between and appropriateness of the two modes to a child audience is often reiterated. For example, a story written by Anna Barbauld in the *Juvenile Forget Me Not* of 1830, echoes the dangers implicit in derisive humour. In her work, a thinly veiled moral allegory entitled ‘The Misses,’ Barbauld opens the tale with the story of ‘*Miss Chief*’, a young lady allowed to “romp all day with the servants and idle boys of the neighbourhood” (1830, p. 2) and who entertains herself with playing tricks on people. She is particularly fond of tripping up unsuspecting passers-by through various means. Such actions “always procured her the enjoyment of a hearty laugh” (p. 2). Barbauld goes on to relate that *Miss Chief* “was a great lover of fun; and at Christmas time distinguished herself by various tricks, such as putting furze balls into the beds, drawing off the clothes in the middle of the night and pulling people’s seats from under them” (p. 3).

Although her delight in tricking others does not appear to derive from reading books, as the review in *The London* might have us believe, Barbauld makes it clear

³² *The London* was a conscious rival to *Blackwood’s Magazine* and even in ‘The Literature of the Nursery’ the author uses the article to attack the editors of the former publication and link them to the trend of moral profligacy they identify in literature for children: “We should suspect them of being concerned in the manufacture of these things” (p. 481)

that ridicule is not an appropriate mode from which children should derive humour. It is significant that Barbauld specifically connects Miss Chief to Christmas larks, implying a warning that even the special circumstance of the Christmas period does not license cruel or inappropriate humour. In fact, Barbauld makes explicit the anxieties of *The London* reviewer regarding the possible deadening of “virtuous principal” in the child as she draws a direct link from Christmas high jinx to the protagonist encountering further moral corruption through lying and cheating. Finally, Barbauld relates how the wayward Miss Chief meets her fate living amongst “the crowd” and is “taken up for riots and other disorderly proceedings” (p. 3). Humour that takes a ‘superior’ mien, which divides mankind by placing one person above another, is divisive in a personal sense and also in that it has the potential to fracture society through riot and disorder. 1830 was a tumultuous year, with unrest in England manifested in the agricultural Swing Riots, whilst in France the July Revolution saw the overthrow of King Charles X by the Duke of Orleans. Thus, in a publication aimed at a middle-class market in a Christmas time frame that privileges unity and accord, this is a significant point for Barbauld to make about laughter and fun to her child audience.

Of course it could be argued that Barbauld paints her lesson here using the very superior mode that she condemns. The ironical gap that Barbauld employs to condemn Miss Chief: (“[she] lives a busy life in the world”, “[she] was a great lover of fun”) necessitates her audience agreeing with the author’s moral superiority over the principal character in order to recognise the discrepancy between what Barbauld says and what she means. Miss Chief’s tricks are potentially attractive and comical to a child reader, and thus, in employing irony, Barbauld takes a calculated risk that her readers will recognise and concur with her judgment. Such “negative teaching”

(Lypp, 1995, p. 185) albeit in a much more grotesque form, has a long tradition stretching back to the Grobian literature of the 16th century (Lypp, pp. 183-6). However, in Barbauld's case the gap between what she says and what she means is framed to ensure her reader's understanding through the sad story of Miss Chief's demise. Humour is thus employed in Barbauld's text for the kind of 'useful' end - to teach a moral lesson - that Anna Marie Hall describes in her preface.

The movement to displace superior and malicious humour from children's literature and to privilege amiability lends itself particularly well to the familial and communal environment of the festive season. As outlined in my introduction, the influence of the German Transcendentalists, particularly Richter and Kant on English writers such as Coleridge, Hazlitt and Thomas Carlyle helped to develop the concept of humour as a uniting principal where all classes stood as equals before God in all the glory of their own inadequacies. Although for Richter this concept was tied to nihilism - he saw this as a levelling, a terrifying comic sublime rather than a unification - Coleridge and Carlyle in particular read into this aspect a positive, unifying characteristic, particularly when humour was combined with pathos. The argument went that if we can laugh but also sympathise with our fellow humans rather than deride them, then this coupling of feelings will allow humour without malice and position the small man alongside the great man and project the great man into the small man's world, achieving thus equality, harmony and beauty in laughter. Thomas Carlyle sums up this sentiment in *Sartor Resartus* (1833-4) by having his character state that humour is:

[...] the bloom and perfume, the purest effluence of a deep, fine and loving nature; a nature in harmony with itself, reconciled to the world and its stuntedness and contradiction, nay, finding in this very contradiction new elements of beauty as well as goodness. (Carlyle qtd. in Tave, 1960, p. 240)

‘Good’ humour is here an outward manifestation of good character (“a deep, fine and loving nature”) where contradiction and deficiency are beautiful and positive rather than negative. This unifying and levelling role for humour is translated into the reappropriation of the freedom of medieval carnival into Christmas celebrations based on fun and fellow feeling, and it echoes the erasure of class difference to be found, according to Bakhtin, in these same celebrations: “everyone participates [in carnival] because its very idea embraces all the people” (1984, p. 7). Such sentiments are also visible for example in the *Gentleman’s Magazine* of 1827 where the anonymous author of ‘Christmas Festivities in Holmsdale, Surrey’ remarks upon a remarkable unification of class and age brought about by the happiness of the season:

Through all the various classes of society, from the princely palace to the humble cottage, this is the great anniversary of enjoyment - the season of universal communion with all the best feelings of the heart: - Benevolence, Friendship, and Love, are the presiding household deities; and under their delightful influence the social virtues are ever active in the promotion of domestic happiness (1827, p. 483)

Again the conservative politics of the periodical play an integral part in creating this idealised and unified scene that celebrates the best qualities of mankind, the “deep, fine and loving nature” of Carlyle, but such sentiments are also frequently echoed in constructions of Christmas for children both within the Christmas annuals and without. In a light-hearted piece entitled ‘The Toy Shop: A Christmas Ditty’ that appeared in *The New Year’s Gift* of 1833, the author emphasises the all-encompassing and communal joy that the festive season can grant. After building up the concept of universal happiness in “the young”, “the aged”, “teacher[s]”, “girl[s]” and “boy[s]” through repetition of the word “joy”, the author then personifies Christmas as benevolent friend that has the power to overcome class distinctions and through its good humour, even dispel grief and pain: “The stranger welcomed, and the poor

supplied; / Goodwill, and plenty, mark thy smiling reign, /And even disease forgets a while its pain” (1833, p. 70). It is an extraordinary claim for Christmas but one that is repeated time and again in these publications. Mary Howitt, for example, contributed extensively to the juvenile annuals, and her pieces were often marked by a gentle comedy entirely in keeping with the supposed good humour and benevolence of the season. She also wrote single-authored books intended for the Christmas market, and in one of these; *Hymns and Fireside Verses* (1839) she constructs within an entertaining poem entitled ‘Old Christmas’ a similar personification of Christmas as that contained within ‘The Toy Shop’. Christmas becomes “a kind old fellow” who “giveth the parish paupers /A good dinner once a year” (p. 113). He tells us “witty old stories” in a “cordial voice” and “cheerful tone” And the poem concludes:

Good luck unto old Christmas,
And long life, let us sing
For he doth more good unto the poor
Than many a crowned King! (p. 113)

The coupling of Christmas with good humour and sympathetic feelings for one’s fellow man produces a natural move towards charity aimed at poorer sections of society. This was a common feature of these annuals and again particularly tied to the season. The entry ‘Christmas Boxes’ in *The New Year’s Gift* of 1830 written by Agnes Strickland, for example, is a prose piece that relates the story of a wealthy family where the various siblings discuss what to buy with their Christmas money (the “Christmas box” of the title). All decide to spend it on ‘frivolities’; toys, new clothes and so on, except for one sister who will not state what she will do with her present. It is only through chance that the others discover she has given her modest wealth to a poor family, resulting for them in life-changing consequences and endless gratitude. At the end of the story the other siblings realise the error of their choice and

make amends, having clothes made for the children of the same family.

This is a serious piece with no hint at humour; however, the subject of Christmas charitable giving was also a frequent topic of satirical comedy in popular print culture, a fact that underlines the erasure of such discordant narratives in many of the Christmas annuals. Whilst there does seem to be some evidence that Christmas Day did signify a particular occasion for sanctioned celebrations even in the poorest circles with records from the poorhouses showing festive fare such as “roast beef, plum pudding” and “spiced cake” given to residents³³, there was also a questioning of the sincerity of middle-class charity. For example, the image in Fig. 3.5, broadly contemporaneous with the annuals, foregrounds a beggar singing “God Rest Ye Merry *Gentlemen*” (emphasis added) whilst, in the background, many vagrants, are rounded up by policemen.



Fig. 3.5. Clark, W & J.O. ‘I Wish You All a Merry Christmas’ London: Orlando Hodgson, c.1835

³³ The website www.workhouses.org.uk uses workhouse records as evidence that prior to 1834 “Christmas Day was the traditional occasion of a treat for most workhouses inmates. In 1828 for example, inmates at St-Martin-In-The-Fields workhouse received roast beef, plum pudding and one pint of porter each [...] in the 1790s [...] Leeds workhouse inmates were given veal and bacon for dinner at Easter and Whitsuntide, roast beef at Christmas, and 1lb. of spiced cake each at each of these festivals.”

This print operates on the ironic gap between the experience of the festive season for the rich and the poor. The direct address to the “gentlemen” of the song strengthened by the visual image of the poor man’s gaze aimed directly at the viewer, mouth open and hand cupped to reinforce his speech, forces the audience of the print to confront this discrepancy. Such satiric comment of course foreshadows this famous theme in Dickens’ *A Christmas Carol* (published 1843) and in less-known stories such as Thomas Hood’s 1844 blackly humoured Christmas story ‘Mrs Peck’s Pudding’ in which a starving family attempts to beg the ingredients for a Christmas pudding from various upstanding yet unyielding members of the community.

The theme of class unification and unity within the family that Howitt’s poem and ‘The Toy Shop’ foreground are of course devoid of these moral concerns. Instead these works are couched, like the prefaces to the annuals, in the vocabulary of magic and amiable humour erasing all contradictory discourses. In ‘The Toy Shop’, joy arrives on “glittering wings” bringing with it “[t]he dance, song, feast; the riddle, jest, and whim” which in turn creates:

Joy to the aged, in their children’s glee;
Joy to the young, in blameless revelry;
Joy to the teacher, and (with least alloy)
Joy to the blooming girl, and ruddy boy. (1833, p. 70)

Here, an explicit link is made between ‘innocent’ children and the kind of permitted ‘innocent’ laughter particularly relevant to the Christmas period. In ‘The Toy Shop’ the children are “blameless” in their revelry and joy appears in a “harmless state”. Even the subtitle of the poem ‘a Christmas Ditty’ invokes from the start the concept of light-hearted and unaffected song, the “innocently amusing histories” to which *The London* reviewer refers as preferable to John Marshall’s satires. The iambic

pentameter reflects the natural rhythm of human speech and the simple rhyming couplets used throughout the verses reinforce ideas of ‘naturalness’ and simplicity. It is a construction that draws upon Romantic concepts of the natural, innocent child derived from Rousseau and which is entirely in accord with the “bright faces” and “laughing children” of Charles Lamb’s description in ‘A Few Words on Christmas’ or the “joyous chubby faces” of Leigh Hunt’s essay in Hone’s *Everyday Book*. Lamb ends his essay stating, let us be “innocent always”, “let us not meet to abuse the world [...] Let us look *of the time*—cheerful and generous, and endeavour to make others as generous and cheerful as ourselves” (1822 p. 497).

Whereas in the papillonnades ‘innocent’ laughter, as I have shown, is rarely naïve, here the innocence becomes part of an entirely artificial construction of the Christmas period in which the concept of ‘harmless’ laughter, along with the roaring fire and the Christmas pudding is taken as a self-evident and generalised trope. Here the ‘blameless’ laugh, the innocent child and the genial fun of the Christmas period are conflated into unquestioning good humour. The philosophical intensity of the role Richter assumes for humour has become here in serious danger of stagnation beside the Christmas fireside, awash in sentimentality and signifying nothing more than a bricolage of appealing yet empty festive tropes. Through this lack of signification, the humour becomes limited, drawing on a small amount of images and references that repeat and reflect the same construction of Christmas. Stuart Tave alludes to this negative side of the amiable mode in talking of the “cheerful confines of amiable humour” (1960, p. 243) and speaking of Thomas Hood’s domestic poetry, Rodney Stenning Edgecomb refers to the “cosiness and comfort” of “his Christmas annualism”, as if discussing a veritable disease (2008, p. xvii). In the urgency to conform to a construction of Christmas that fulfilled a perceived need in society for

something reassuring to hold on to in times of significant social upheaval, many of the authors that contributed to the Christmas annuals (both juvenile and adult) left unquestioned the homogenous and sterilised humorous good cheer in which they so readily partook. Indeed, Donald Gray in his essay on Victorian laughter remarks on the ease by which both writers and by association, their audiences “agreed that laughter should properly try for *nothing more* than innocuous amusement” (1966, p.147 emphasis added). Ironically, the originally intended freedom of the Christmas carnival space becomes as formulaic and commodified as the drudgery of work and schoolroom from which it was intended as an escape. Drawing on the past has recreated not the dynamic Christmas of the Elizabethans or Medievals but rather a static Christmas trapped in a domestic setting and over-reliant on homogeneity and comfort. It is ironic that when laughter becomes too “pleasantly inconsequential” (Gray, 1966, p. 147) it is in danger of stultification and becoming unsatisfactory.

Indeed, William Hazlitt preempted the potential dangers of such a situation when he remarked, “A degree of barbarism and rusticity seems necessary to the perfection of humour. The droll and laughable depend on peculiarity and incongruity of character” (1825, p. 561). Although Hazlitt was writing here about character-based humour in the novelistic tradition, he perceptively indicates that sanitised humour is too bland, great humour depends upon quirkiness and rough edges. The following section illustrates how *The Christmas Box*, in addition to conforming to the aegis of good humour so important to the juvenile Christmas annuals, also allows itself some license to escape the confines of the drawing room and present humorous material with just the rough edges to which Hazlitt alludes.

‘Rusticity and Peculiarity’ – the Eclectic Humour of *The Christmas Box*

The editor of *The Christmas Box*, Thomas Crofton Croker, like many of his contemporaries, was deeply connected with the reconstruction of a contemporary Christmas using the traditions of Christmas past. As a folklorist and antiquarian who had published numerous books on the folklore and traditions of Ireland, Croker often celebrated the bizarre and the humorous in his work³⁴. He also actively reworked Christmas celebrations in his own life and in later texts, in the form of plays that he himself performed or wrote for patrons. For example, Croker performed the role of Father Christmas in a charity masque written by Theodore Hook and performed at the house of Thomas Baylis on December 30th 1839 (Matoff, 2010, p. 364), as well as writing *Recollections of Old Christmas* in 1850 for performance as an amateur masque by the aristocratic Denison family at Grimston Hall, Yorkshire on Christmas Eve. However, although littered with the same tropes of Christmas past that often became so overworked in the seasonal annuals, such productions also involved Crofton Croker in a dynamic reworking of these Christmas traditions into the present time. Croker’s involvement with Christmas was a kind of halfway house between the sterility of strung-together empty symbols of Christmas and the raucous humour of the saturnalia. The over-riding conditions of such revelry for Croker was that these events took place in a marked off space - in private houses, in the domestic drawing room environment, in the kind of setting in which Kant saw a particular role for

³⁴ For a discussion of Croker’s Irish Fairy legends that often involve such humour, see Schacker, 2003. pp. 46-78

humour. This meant the revels were ‘safe’ and lacking in the critical concerns of riot and disorder that might be levelled at more public celebrations. With this in mind, although Croker’s first Christmas annual for children also contains a fair dose of Christmas nostalgia, Croker takes advantage of the same ‘safe’ space of the confines of the annual to present a collection of often humorous works that contain a large degree of dynamic humour - comedy that retains, as Hazlitt perceptively suggests, some mixed sense of the ludicrous, the bizarre and the grotesque and as such avoids the potential for anodyne sterility in amiable humour. He also often collects in this work examples of humour that challenge his juvenile audience to participate actively in his subjects. As Croker suggests in his preface, this requires ludic involvement in the ‘museum’ he creates.

Some of the quirkiness of the humour in *The Christmas Box* is derived from the illustrations of W.H. Brooke. *The Christmas Box* is the only juvenile Christmas annual to use woodcut illustrations rather than engravings to embellish the production, and importantly Brooke’s cuts fully complement the individual contributions to the annual. This is in contrast to the other juvenile publications that tended to follow the established convention in the adult Christmas annuals of commissioning poems and other contributions to match a particular engraving. Brooke’s illustrations, then, have much more in common with the woodcuts in chapbooks and folk literature than the fully detailed engravings copied from works of art of other annuals. This is a format shared by Thomas Hood when his *Comic Annuals* were published from 1830 onwards, and Katherine Harris’ brief discussion of this publication remarks how that in using “simplified woodcut engraving[s] (taken from a crude line drawing)” (2015, p. 156) as opposed to the new technique of steel engraving employed by Ackermann and others. Hood “moves backwards in

technology”, but that the illustrations serve “the sentiment of the volume” (p. 156). Harris is here unclear about the definition of this ‘sentiment’, yet she appears to connect it to the irreverent style of the comedy and the frequent satire of the literary annual genre itself to be found in the pages of Hood’s publication. It is interesting that the most humorous of the juvenile annuals and the first comic annuals should both share a similar method of illustration, a technique that has also been employed by other humorous illustrators such as Edward Lear in his *Book of Nonsense* (1837) and by contemporary artists such as Quentin Blake. The line drawings often reflect movement and life and a caricaturistic style that can be read as standing in opposition to the more traditional and more detailed engravings taken from works by members of the Royal Academy that were presented in other juvenile annuals.

Illustrations such as those of Brooke and Hood also form part of the “commercial visual culture” (2013, p. 37) of which Brian Maidment speaks in his book *Comedy, Caricature and the Social Order*. Here the author discusses a general domesticated visual humour that he states, “had shifted its central habitus from the street to the drawing room” (p. 37), and where in the 1830s the “large scale single plate engraved image as the dominant graphic comic mode” was “replaced by wood engraving” (p. 58). The illustrations of *The Christmas Box* then form part of a larger comic movement that also included Brooke’s other works for an adult audience such as the illustrations for Harrison’s whimsical production *The Humorist and Companion for the Christmas Fireside* (1832) as well as contributions to the contemporary periodical *The Mirror*. Thus although Croker’s publication might figure as an anomaly in terms of the Annual genre, it is however, very much in dialogue with other print cultures aimed at an older audience. Indeed, a review in *The Mirror* of the *Christmas Box* for 1829 praises the humorous qualities of Brooke’s work:

The *Christmas Box* cuts are all fun and frolic [...] These are the little quips of the pencil that curl up our eye-lashes and dimple our faces more than all the Vatican gallery. They are trifles - aye, 'trifles light as air' - but their influence convinces us that trilling is part of the great business of life (1828, p. 384)³⁵

Brooke's illustrations, as the phraseology of *The Mirror* indicates, are humorous vignettes in their own right; "little quips of the pencil" and add considerably to the humour of the contributions. I have already briefly discussed Brooke's illustrations of the 'Lord of Misrule' and the 'Christmas Pudding' (Figs. 3.1 and 3.2), but here I wish to unite the illustration and the anonymously authored poem the 'Tragical History of Major Brown' (Fig. 3.6) in order to demonstrate how this poem integrates humour from many sources into both word and image and how this requires an active engagement on behalf of the reader to appreciate the comedy of the whole production.

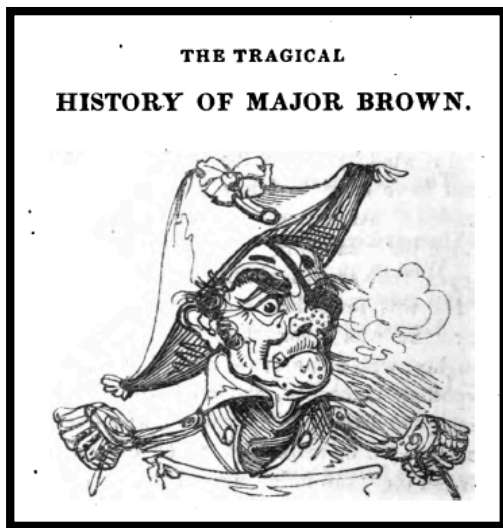


Fig. 3.6. Brooke, W.H. 'The Tragical History of Major Brown'. *The Christmas Box*. Ed. Thomas Crofton Croker, 1829, p. 134

³⁵ This comment echoes Maidment's discussion of the growth of 'miseries' roughly concurrent with the Christmas annuals whereby comic art in the same mode as Brooke's illustrations reflects the "trifles of life", or as Maidment terms it, the "urban misadventure and inconvenience" of life (2013, p.58)

The poem takes as its subject a great balloon ride undertaken by the central character. Major Brown. Balloon rides were very much in vogue as a leisure activity at this time and as such the poem incongruously connects this topical event with the ancient verse form of the ode, used to form the basic structure of the work. The poem is written in the mock-heroic mode with frequent undercutting of heroic rhetoric and the theme of the great adventure or quest. As James Beattie states about this kind of incongruous humour, there is “[s]olemnity of the character assumed by the mock-heroic poet; he considers little things as great, and describes them accordingly” (p. 397). Major Brown, now redundant from war decides to undertake a last adventure like many others who have ascended in hot air balloons:

‘Let me - let me’ the Major cries.
Let me, like him, ascend;
And if it fall that I should rise.
Who knows where it may end?’ (p. 135)

The Major is a man full of his own self-importance, a braggart who deludes himself with claims of his own heroism and skill. The humour of the poem is in the constant undermining of the Major’s character and rhetoric. For example, the opening of the poem makes it clear that Brown’s introduction as “valiant, courteous, sage / Experienced, wise, or witty” (p. 134) is true only in his own mind:

If any man in any age.
In any town or city
Was ever valiant, courteous, sage
Experienced, wise or witty;

That man was Major Brown by name.
The fact you cannot doubt;
For he himself would say the same
Ten times a day about (p. 134)

Equally, the tautologous: “wise’ and “sage and the shower of other ‘worthy’

adjectives, culminating in the use of “or” rather than “and”, suggest a degree of selection and redundancy - the Major merely selects empty synonyms to describe himself. Like his fated balloon ride the Major’s pedigree literally goes nowhere. When the major gets caught in a chestnut tree his physical false start echoes the tautologous linguistic play:

The cords are cut - a mighty shout! –
The globe ascends on high;
And, like a ball from gun shot out.
The Major mounts the sky, -

Or would have done, but cruel chance
Forbade it so to be.
And bade the Major not advance, -
Caught in a chestnut tree (p. 136)

The military references; ‘advance’, ‘shot out’, ‘gun’ further highlight the discrepancy between the former occupation of the major and his current, less heroic, situation.

The humour of the poem works upon a recognition from the reader of the tropes of the heroic quest narrative, the usual form of the ode to praise its subject and also the knowledge that the main character is a figure of fun. It is interesting that the review of *The Christmas Box* in *The Mirror* links this “capital piece of fun” (p. 384) to the stories of Baron Munchausen by remarking upon Brooke’s comic presentation of “Major Brown with a Munchausen face” (p. 384). The stories of Baron Munchausen first brought to England in a translation by Raspe in 1785 had by this period also become a popular subject as a children’s story³⁶ with the (anti) hero turning from an arch-deceiver likely to dupe a gullible audience into what Sarah

³⁶ See for example, *The Surprising Adventures of The Renowned Baron Munchausen* (1811) published by Thomas Tegg and illustrated by Thomas Rowlandson. Also the much cheaper Scottish chapbook: *The surprising adventures, miraculous escapes and wonderful travels of the renowned Baron Munchausen, who was carried away on the back of an eagle over France to Gibraltar &c. &c.* [Edinburgh?] [between 1780 and 1820]

Kareem terms, “a laughing stock” (2012, p. 498). In her analysis of the trajectory of the Munchausen narrative between these two points, Kareem points out the critical interpretative role played by the reader in the changing projection of the Baron:

Where the original Narrative casts the Baron as the benevolent enlightener of his grateful readers, the revised Narrative rejects an image of readers as passive consumers of delusion whom need an authority figure to teach them how to think critically. Instead, the revised Narrative reimagines its readers as active collaborators in sustaining fictional worlds [...](p. 486)

Likewise, in the Major Brown poem, the central character is a ‘laughing stock’, a figure through whom the reader can clearly see. The tautologies of the poem that mock both the heroic and the odic form allow the reader to derive humour from the character of the Major. In so doing the humour conforms to Henri Bergson’s philosophy in *Laughter: An Essay on the Meaning of the Comic* (1900) that in ridicule it is the inability of the character to realise the mechanical or ingrained nature of their behaviour that provokes laughter (1914. p. 9). It is also a humour which shares something of the character based whimsicality of the novelistic tradition, but it is also one in which the humour can only be appreciated through active participation in the complex interweaving of literary antecedents and traditional poetic forms. The reader has to “think critically” at the same time as revelling in the play of the poem and Brooke’s grotesquely amusing illustration.

This type of humorous play that relies upon the active engagement of the juvenile readership occurs frequently in *The Christmas Box*. ‘The Enchanted Ass’ for example, which is based on Apuleius’ classical tale *The Golden Ass* (c. 170 AD), tells the story of Lucius who is turned into a donkey whilst rescuing a young woman. He undergoes many tribulations and comic adventures whilst desperately attempting to regain his human form. He finally eats some rose petals that have the desired effect.

The piece is comic in many aspects, not least in Brooke's humorous illustrations that depict Lucius drinking in the house of his saviours, but the final coup d'état comes with an unexpected deflation of the familiar moral ending of such stories. Instead of the author finding a lesson amongst the comic narrative, the moral is itself comedic. The author describes how it "was a very lucky thing for [Lucius] that rose leaves happened in those days to be the charm for disenchanting men that are turned into asses". However, he warns, "nobody should trust to chances of that kind". Indeed, the author states bathetically "it may be paid down as a general rule, that he who is once an ass will always continue one" (1828, p. 161). It is a fittingly amusing ending to an entertaining narrative that very much supports Kant's explanation of the comic, that humour is "an affectation arising from the sudden transformation of a strained expectation into nothing" (2007, p. 54). The reader, particularly the child reader, accustomed to being taught a moral lesson at the end of a story waits for the warning to arrive. Here the delayed expectation is undercut by quite the opposite sentiment: not a moral but a humorous 'truth' where real asses and human asses-as-fools coalesce in incongruous similitude. The reader's expectation is thus dissipated into the unexpected. The mode of humour is not superior but neither is it sentimental nor sterile, and it was often quoted in reviews of *The Christmas Box* as a fine example of Christmas fun³⁷.

Pleasure in the Pun

With the wide variety of humorous styles at work in *The Christmas Box*, Crofton

³⁷ For example, *The London Literary Gazette* reprinted the illustrations from 'The Enchanted Ass' in their review of *The Christmas Box* in December 1827, p. 786

Croker is true to his word. This first juvenile annual weaves together pieces “some more interesting, some more amusing than others” in a way that leads to a fluid and dynamic play. Indeed, the wide selection of contributors to the publication as well as Croker’s skilful editorship are key factors in its success. Sitting alongside the well-tailored recount of the events in France by J. Lockhart is a comic piece by the well-known prankster and humorist Theodore Hook and an equally amusing piece in the tradition of the *Batrachomyomachia*. Although Theodore Hook was often considered to be a cruel prankster and the author of numerous hoaxes and pranks as well as the editor of the highly satiric paper *John Bull* (1820-92), in his contribution to *The Christmas Box*, the humour is gentle, the poem pokes fun at pedagogic prescription and, like ‘Major Brown’, gently undermines the ludicrous nature of seemingly coherent claims. Hook’s poem reflects the spirit of the medieval carnival in its good-natured challenge to authority, and it particularly engages with the comic form of the pun, an element that has had a chequered reception throughout history, and in this era in connection with a juvenile reader, holds an additional layer of complexity.

Hook uses as the base for the poem, a disingenuous misreading of the preface to the well-known and well-used Entick’s dictionary:

My readers may know that to all the editions of Entick’s Dictionary, commonly used in schools, there is prefixed “A Table of Words that are alike, or nearly alike, in sound, but different in spelling and signification”.

It must be evident that this Table is neither more nor less than an early provocation to punning; the whole mystery of which vain art consists of the use of words, the sound and sense of which are at variance.

In order if possible to check any disposition to punnery in youth, which may be fostered by this manual, I have thrown together the following adaptation of ENTICK’S hints to young beginners, hoping thereby to afford a warning and exhibit a deformity to be avoided, rather than an example to be followed. At the same time showing the caution children should observe in using words that have more than one meaning. (1828, p. 55 original italics)

Here Hook's reference to the "vain art" of punnery echoes Joseph Addison's sentiments in 'True and False Wit' (1711) that puns are an example of "false wit" (1827, p. 3), because as Simon Alderson terms it, "they resulted from arbitrary homonyms or near homonyms, not from anything innate in the object or ideas themselves" (2006, p. 2). Because puns do not denote empirical truth, in fact to the contrary they give a false reading of truth, they do not serve any useful purpose and thus are useless vanities. For the developing capacity of reason in the child they are particularly problematic as puns confuse the link between the signifier and the signified. However, as Alderson states, Addison's opposition to punnery was also rooted in a class anxiety that acknowledged that puns are one element of humour that can be enjoyed and indeed employed by all sectors of society and by all ages. As James Beattie remarks: everyone from "Queen Elizabeth" to "clowns and children" can laugh at puns (1776, p. 342). In the desire of the mid-eighteenth century to define polite and intellectual humour and distance itself from the excessive, raucous and essentially anti-intellectual humour of the lower orders, punnery occupied an anxious space between the two divisions and thus was to be avoided. Such a view also influenced the early nineteenth century with, as Sarah Lodge states in her work on Thomas Hood, the pun still treading a "fine line" between "social and anti-social behaviour" (2007, p. 153).

Hood however, and members of the so-called 'Cockney circle', comprising amongst others, Leigh Hunt, Keats, Lamb and Hood himself, took a conscious position in favour of punnery as an exercise in mental dexterity and linguistic skill. Such a position echoed the Scottish school of philosophers particularly the work of Dugald Stewart who published the first volume of his *Elements of the Philosophy of the Human Mind* close to the turn of the century in 1792. This school of thought

discussed the importance of the comic to science in terms of the mental flexibility needed to produce humour. As Billig states:

Those who think in straight lines, doggedly sorting out the world by putting different things in different boxes, will neither show genuine creativity on which scientific originality depends, nor appreciate wit. A risk - a flight of fancy – is necessary for both (2005, p. 65).

What the mock-seriousness of the preface to Hook's poem shows is a deep engagement with this kind of linguistic play and an affirmation of punning against rigid seriousness. It also operates within the mode of the cautionary tale that was so prevalent in this period³⁸. The first verse opens:

My little dears, who learn to read.
Pray early learn to shun
That very silly thing indeed.
Which people call a PUN.
Read Entick's rules, and 'twill be found
How simple an offence
It is to make the selfsame sound
Afford a double sense, (p. 56)

The reference to rules and offences emphasise puns as prohibition. Hook then proceeds to demonstrate linguistic dexterity and replicates a child-like delight in words with a "double sense":

The *dyer*, who by *dying* lives,
A *dire* life maintains;
The glazier, it is known, receives
His profit from his *panes*.
By gardeners *thyme* is tied, 'tis true.
When spring is in its prime:
But *time* or tide won't wait for you
If you are *tied* for time. (p. 58 original emphasis)

³⁸ See Styles, 1997 for a discussion of the cautionary tale in children's poetry and the ways in which this form has been parodied for comic effect.

In an auditory sense the poem is replete with fun. The alliteration of the ‘d’s, p’s and t’s in the verse “The *dyer*, who by *dying* lives,” cause the words to trip quickly off the tongue and replicates the mock confusion of the sense and the sound. Visually the orthographic differences between the same words and thus their meaning requires a deep engagement in what Huizinga calls the “play spirit” of poetry and language (1955, p. 132). And of course the implicit satirisation of tools of learning: dictionaries, lists of words, rules and regulations foregrounds play above work. The audience is then directly addressed in the penultimate verse with the same mock serious warning to avoid the “vain art” of punnery.

Then now you see, my little dears,
The trick to make a pun;
A trick which you, through coming years.
Should sedulously shun.
The fault admits of no defence
For wheresoe’er ‘tis found
You sacrifice the sound for sense -
The sense is never sound

So let your words and actions, too.
One single meaning prove,
And just in all you say or do.
You’ll gain esteem and love.
In mirth and play no harm you’ll know
When duty’s task is done;
But parents ne’er should let ye go
Unpunished for a PUN. (p. 58)

Again, for the child reader, an active participation in the play of the text is required in order to constitute meaning; it operates in a semantic sense within the text and also in terms of understanding the satiric mode with its undermining of the absolute authority of the “single meaning”. Hook’s poem tacitly gives authority to his child readers to ‘rearrange the museum’ to recalibrate the schedule of learning laid down for them and to question authoritative readings. The poem conveys a mock-impression of

usefulness, through the mode of the cautionary tale, revelling simultaneously in an essentially non-productive project - an endless cycle with which the child can interact with words that are replete yet somehow empty of signification. It is not perhaps the kind of ‘use’ for humour that Anna Marie Hall had originally envisaged in her preface, but it does require an active child reader with the mental dexterity outlined by Dugold Stewart.

Such play also occurs in other juvenile Christmas annual publications such as Emma Roberts’ ‘Rhymes of the Cards’ in the 1833 *New Year’s Gift and Juvenile Souvenir*. This poem is constructed as a sustained personification of a pack of playing cards with the various suits operating as families, and many references to different card games. The poet, in a similar way to the papillonades, devises a ‘backstory’ for ‘characters’ where the names of card games and the vocabulary of such pastimes hold a sensible yet nonsensical double meaning. Thus the “common sort” (the non-picture cards) “repair to court, / And ‘cut’ a monstrous dash. / In crowds they rush, / To make a ‘flush,’ / And pocket all the cash” (1833, p. 48) - placing the vocabulary of card games in inverted commas (or italics) was a common technique for pointing out puns in many texts of this era. Robert’s poem then has a threefold connection with play in that the poem itself revolves around a physical pastime for leisure hours, whilst the humour turns this actual game into poetical fun where individual lexical items hold meanings in both these categories.

In a less obvious manner, the 1832 *New Year’s Gift* contains William Howitt’s poem entitled ‘A Poetical Chapter on Tails’. This work opens with two young boys asking their father to tell them a story:

One evening three boys did their father assail,
With - ‘Tell us a tale, papa. Tell us a tale!’
‘A tale?’ said their father ‘Oh yes! you shall see
That a tale of all tails it this evening shall be;’ (1832, p. 123)

The father then proceeds to recite how useful the cat's tail can be to this animal. The juvenile audience reading the poem have the advantage of apprehending the orthographic pun before the listening children realise the humour, complaining: "'Oh! you're joking, papa', cried at once all the three, / 'Yours are tails with an *i* / and not with an *e*'" (p. 123 original emphasis) The rest of the poem then goes on to elaborate on the usefulness of tails to each animal and finally turns to other ways in which the word tail is attached to different objects such as the "cat-o-nine-tails" and the "tail of a comet" (p. 127). Here the pedagogic element in Howitt's poem is integrated into a humorous narrative that also plays with the ideas of storytelling and the fact that these annuals were often read aloud as part of family reading. The homophonic play is here celebrated and embraced rather than suppressed. Instead the child reader is encouraged in all these examples to revel in the delight of 'useless' play at the same time as it encourages them to think critically about meaning, language and authority. These different examples of the comic in *The Christmas Box* and other publications moves humour away from the static nostalgic and good cheer of yuletide celebrations into a fuller and more dynamic arena that embraces the humorous licence of the carnival and the imaginative potential of language.

The juvenile Christmas annuals, then, are a remarkable collection of publications that presented a completely new way for children to access literature in the early nineteenth century. For this reason alone, they deserve much greater attention and discussion than has been the case to date. It has been the entertaining and amusing aspects of these publications, however that has been the primary concern of this chapter and again the literature contained within the annuals has a vital role to play in sanctioning laughter as an aid to learning as well as for pure pleasure alone.

The juvenile Christmas annuals reinforce the obsession of this era, reflected in popular culture, with reclaiming Christmas as a time for celebration and fun with children at the heart of a convivial and familial scene, but they also reflect a continued deep anxiety in regard to the appropriateness of certain types of humour for children. Despite the often confining aspects of the ‘amiable’ mode, frequently the juvenile annuals allow their child audience to engage widely with humour and through its guise asks them to think critically and autonomously about authority, learning and the literature that informs their productions.

My next chapter now focuses on a range of texts that were broadly contemporaneous with the juvenile Christmas annuals, but which were accessible, due to their cheap price, to a much broader range of young readers. The children’s chapbook, is a complex production that has an intrinsic connection with humorous folk culture through chapbooks aimed at an adult audience. However, this new type of literature is also imbued with some of the values and attitudes towards the comic that were present in the burgeoning children’s book industry aimed at a more affluent audience and in the Christmas annuals that I have already discussed. The following analysis discusses how comic texts, humorous figures and tropes can move backwards and forwards across the class divide and like the papillonnades, both reflect and reinterpret prevailing attitudes towards humour and the child.

Chapter 4 – Children’s Chapbooks

Remediating Humour: Chapbooks and Children’s Literature

Much of my analysis in the preceding chapters has centred upon humorous children’s literature aimed at a middle-class juvenile audience. The papillonnades and other verse poems formed part of a current of levity that was an important theme in children’s literature of the early nineteenth century, whilst the Christmas annuals mixed a brand of amiable humour with an Enlightenment emphasis on education within a new style of publication. Despite Thomas Crofton Croker’s attention to stories of popular and folk culture in his publications, the annuals, like the papillonnades, were squarely destined for a middle-class drawing room and economically were far out of reach of the working classes. This chapter however, will interrogate the form of the children’s chapbook that evolved in the early nineteenth century and that was economically accessible to a wide range of readers across the social spectrum. These publications, although mixed in subject matter, counted humorous stories, songs and entertaining fables within their range and, as I analyse in the following chapter, were also in frequent dialogue with more expensive comic texts destined for a more affluent juvenile audience. This dissemination and remediation of humour, often pertaining to the same theme or comic character, through a wide geographical area and crossing class boundaries, is a key aspect of literature within this period.

Informing this discussion is the term ‘remediation’ drawn from the work of Bolter and Grusin. In their book *Remediation: Understanding New Media*, these theorists use this term to describe how new media can rework existing textual and visual forms, and how these older aspects then adapt to the newer versions. The

authors, in this work, are primarily discussing the visual and hypertextual age of the internet, film and television, but in their discussion of Frederic Jameson’s ideas concerning “mediatization” (1999, p. 56) they acknowledge that reformulation can apply to all modes of culture even those in the past, and they proffer Jameson’s hypothesis that this was “always the case throughout human history” (Jameson qtd. in Bolter and Grusin, p. 56). Certainly, the concept of remediation, particularly in terms of the reciprocal aspect of their theory bears some resemblance to Bakhtin’s ideas concerning dialogism that he relates to the early modern period and which has already informed my previous chapters. However, Bolter and Grusin add an economic dimension to their theory of remediation that seems as pertinent to the early nineteenth century as it does to the twenty-first and which is particularly interesting in terms of the commercial factors that helped to shape this new type of chapbook. In stating that new media “has to find its economic place by replacing or supplementing what is already available, and [gain] popular acceptance” by improving on older variants (p. 68), Bolter and Grusin assign an importance to the consumers (the readers/purchases) of children’s chapbooks that foregrounds their role in both consuming and reshaping the literature that they read. Moreover, ‘remediation’ is also a concept with a clear link to Williams’ discussion of the persistence of the residual within dominant culture (see Chapter 3). Children’s chapbooks frequently display, in their textual and visual features, evidence of a visceral humour derived from folk culture and which cements the connection between these children’s texts and their more generalised chapbook origins. Analysing the residual elements of comic folk culture in the remediation of these early nineteenth-century works reveals a complex dialogue between popular and elite culture and between the social classes themselves that as Gatrell suggests can “take us to the heart of a generation’s shifting attitudes,

sensibilities and anxieties” (2006. p. 5). This chapter examines humour in the children's chapbook in conjunction with the comic elements of cheap literature aimed at a primarily adult audience, before moving on to interrogate the remediation of the comic through the folk character of Dame Trot in children’s chapbooks and children’s literature aimed at a more affluent audience. Finally, I focus on representations of a physical location of folk culture; the fairground, and its appearance in chapbook texts, children’s literature and wider print culture in order to interrogate how this carnival locale can contribute to the complex discourse regarding humour and social class in this period.

Chapbooks ‘proper’ and children’s chapbooks

The definition of the ‘chapbook’ is, as Barry McKay states in his *Introduction to Chapbooks* (2003), both complex and contested. He deems the expression merely a “bibliographic conceit, employed as a generic term to cover a well-known genre of pocket-sized booklet, popular from the sixteenth to the latter part of the nineteenth century” (p. 5). This is of course a very wide definition and, as McKay goes on to explain, can encompass books with varied subject matter, as well as differing audiences - from almanacs to joke books, from accounts of sensational criminal trials to books of prayer. The term ‘chapbook’ seems to have arisen from the distribution method of all these types of literature in that they were sold from the 1500s onwards by itinerant peddlers, or chapmen, that toured the country selling books and many other household items and who were an indispensable part of life, particularly rural life in pre-industrial England. The majority of the books they sold were cheap, costing from ½ to 1-2 pence, and although the body of chapbook literature varied in terms of

subject matter, one factor that bridged different categories was entertainment and humour. McKay states that songbooks or garlands as they were sometimes known, constituted “the largest number of any one class of the genre” (p. 5). Jokes and riddles too were frequently part of this oral to written transmission within the chapbook mode. Simon Dickie in *Laughter and Ridicule* observes that in the eighteenth century numerous jest books originally printed for an affluent audience were also disseminated in abridged form into cheaper literature (2011, p. 145), with many of the same jokes retained in both versions. As a medium of both “entertainment and information” (p. 6), as McKay terms it, the possibility of collective shared pleasure derived from singing and joke telling is similar to the way in which the juvenile Christmas annuals also configure humour as an antidote to the mundane and the workaday, part of the “leisure and amusement” (2009, p. 1176b para. 30-5), critical to life of which Aristotle speaks in *Nicomachean Ethics* (999). Or, as the chapbook *Whetstone for Dull Wits* termed it in c.1790:

Of Merry Books this is the Chief,
‘Tis as a Purging PILL;
To carry off all heavy Grief,
And make you laugh your Fill (p. 1).

This shared pleasure in reading also encompassed story-telling, with folk tales particularly common in chapbook literature. ‘Histories’ such as *Bevis of Hampton*, *Valentine and Orson* and *Jack the Giant Killer* were attractive both to an adult and a juvenile audience. Testimony from John Bunyan in the 1600s and John Clare in the late eighteenth century illustrates the centrality of such titles to their own childhood reading (McKay, 2003, p. 10; Tibble, 1951, p.19), and emphasises the lack of fixed demarcation between juvenile and adult audiences in this genre. Indeed, the appeal of chapbooks to a child audience also appears to have crossed class boundaries. In her

study of the ledgers of the Clays of Rugby from 1744-1784 (2007), Jan Fergus attests that many of the same ‘histories’ read by Bunyan and Clare were also bought from this bookseller by the well-heeled pupils at Rugby school. Moreover, Fergus’ research shows that a whole host of humorous works were chosen by these boys for their own private reading and that these included popular, comic texts such as *Don Quixote* and *The Adventures of Peregrine Pickle* abridged into cheaper versions (2007, p. 269). Like the transmission of jest books from costly to cheaper forms, the chapbook provided the opportunity for the dissemination of many humorous texts to both children and/or the less wealthy.

Young people it seems, as Matthew Grenby concludes in ‘Chapbooks, Children and Children’s Literature’ (2007) have always been counted amongst the audience of this cheap mode of literature, even if these texts were not aimed specifically at a juvenile audience. Grenby also goes on to state that generally children seem to have read chapbooks “for pleasure, not as part of any curriculum” (p. 290), emphasising the entertaining aspects of this literature. This delight taken in chapbooks by children is evidenced by the testimony of James Raine, son of a blacksmith in the mid 1790s, who states that as a child he “revell[ed] in the glories of an immense bundle of penny histories and ballads” as well as taking “infinite delight” in his grandmother’s copy of Aesop’s fables from the early 1700s “tattered and torn and imperfect [...] [and] ornamented with woodcuts” (Marsden, 1991. pp. 14-15)

Given the crossover nature of this mode then, it is perhaps little surprise that at the turn of the nineteenth century, chapbook publishers also saw a commercial opportunity in producing cheap literature that was aimed specifically at a juvenile audience. John Newbery and his fellow publishers were already catering to the demand for literature aimed at young people drawn from the rising middle classes, but

the increase in literacy amongst the lower orders and amongst children also facilitated a commercial opportunity for cheaper books serving the lower socio-economic end of the market. Kathryn Sutherland states that “between 1780 and 1830 the reading public “quintupled [...] from 1 ½ to 7 million” (1994, p. 3). A look at the catalogue published by the firm of Dicey-Marshall in 1764 reveals a publisher with a huge range of texts and prints for a wide audience, both adult and juvenile. His list encompasses those who could afford expensive books and prints and those with lesser means. Children are specifically catered for through the ‘Small Histories’ and ‘Small Books’ section that contain works such as *The Famous History of the Surprising Giants in Guildhall London* (1741) and *Nancy Cock’s Dainty Fine Song Book* (c. 1780). These titles sold at around 6 pence, but the ‘Histories’ section sold for a penny and contained many stories that echoed the contents of the general chapbooks and which would continue to be a mainstay of children’s reading in the nineteenth century: *Aesop’s Fables*, *Fortunatus*, *Jack and the Giants*, *Children in the Wood* to name but a few. What is evident from this catalogue is that a specific literature for children instigated by John Newbury and others was at this point not just targeted at the affluent middle classes for whom children were now regarded as a valuable asset to be educated through literature, but the influential Dicey-Marshall firm also saw a commercial opportunity in producing literature for children in more inexpensive form.

After the Diceys and the Marshalls, such cheap works for children proliferated into the early nineteenth century with publishers such as John Catnach and John Evans (a former employee of John Marshall and who is a central figure in my discussion³⁹) producing cheap literature for children from a London base. However,

³⁹ See Stoker, 2014. p. 134 for details of this relationship and the ensuing legal dispute between the men

the spread of literacy and the demand for cheap print was such that publishers in many other towns and cities around the United Kingdom also began to sell affordable books aimed at a juvenile audience. John Rusher of Banbury, for example, had a range of chapbooks for children, James Kendrew in York was likewise celebrated for his cheap juvenile literature, whilst in Alnwick, William Davison (closely connected to John Catnach in London), printed beautifully illustrated works that although inexpensive, were far removed in terms of quality from the cheap patters of the Dicey-Marshall business. In Yorkshire William Walker published his own take on the popular stories that fed chapbook texts for children, whilst north of the border, James Lumsden in Glasgow and George Ross in Edinburgh, expanded the availability of inexpensive literature specifically for a juvenile audience. This new kind of publication had several links to the chapbooks aimed at a general market that still proliferated in this period in that they were short in length (usually eight or twelve pages), cheap in price ($\frac{1}{2}$ to 2d) and often incorporated the popular stories, songs and riddles of their earlier counterparts, yet these publications also had important differences. The main change was in terms of distribution. These texts, unlike traditional chapbooks, were usually sold from publishers’ shops rather than by itinerant peddlers. Urbanisation had increased the number of readers within easy reach of booksellers in cities and towns throughout the British Isles and although the chapman still continued to trade in the mainly rural areas, more texts were sold from physical premises. Another key factor was the attention paid to the visual qualities of the book. From the attractive floral Dutch or “coloured sugar paper” in which many were wrapped, to the frequent synergy of illustrations and text in these productions and the “neat and often bespoke wood engravings” (Alderson and de Marez Oyens, 2006, p. 200), juvenile chapbooks were an appealing mode that in this respect took as

their cue children’s literature aimed at a more affluent audience

However, the locus of most modern scholarship is the way in which this genre was influenced by the moral tales and instructive texts that were one important aspect of the burgeoning children’s book market. As Grenby testifies, several critics including Geoffrey Summerfield have hypothesised that in fact children’s literature grew out of opposition to the entertaining, yet morally and pedagogically ‘empty’ content of original chapbook literature and that the new mode of children’s chapbooks reflected a move towards more morally edifying literature for children in a cheaper package. Grenby undercuts this neat teleological progression stating that a specific children’s literature actually had the effect of proliferating the chapbook form albeit in an adapted version, though, ironically his essay also focuses on the moral tale. These children’s chapbooks, he states “were instructive and improving enough to fulfil the purposes of the new children’s literature, but they were cheap enough to find buyers at every level of society” (2007, p. 301). Whilst it is undeniably the case that this Enlightenment ideology did permeate the new, cheaper mode of juvenile literature, little work has been undertaken that reveals the scope of humour present in many of these cheap works, and the extent of the comic dialogic exchange between children’s literature across the social classes. My analysis aims to fill this gap.

One final point of clarification on the children’s chapbook. Although Grenby asserts that, “Anyone who has worked with historic children’s books will instantly recognize this new kind of product” (2007, p. 291), scholars still conflate the children’s chapbook with other more expensive forms of children’s literature. Despite the one-shilling price tag of Harris’s papillonnades for example, Donelle Ruwe in *Nineteenth Century Children’s Poetry* describes the publisher “launching a series of illustrated juvenile chapbooks inspired by Roscoe’s poem” (2014, p. 167). Although

this is perhaps merely evidence of the redundancy of the ‘bibliographic conceit’ of which McKay speaks, it is important for my following analysis to note that my definition of the children’s chapbook concurs generally with that of Matthew Grenby’s in that this product pertains to printed matter aimed at a juvenile audience which was generally sold for a low price (½ to 2 pennies). In this way, although these works could, (and surely were), bought by children belonging to the middle and upper classes, they were also accessible to children (and/or their parents) lower down the social scale⁴⁰. This is particularly important for my conjecture at the heart of this chapter that humour was widely disseminated in this era to a diverse class and geographical audience and that the interplay of social hierarchies with popular and elite culture is played out in the comic mode.

Low Humour, Songs, Games and Fun

One of the critical objections throughout history to children reading chapbooks ‘proper’, as Roscoe and Brimmell terms them, was the ‘low’ nature of the humour often contained therein⁴¹. ‘Low’ humour, sometimes called elemental comedy, is usually defined as pertaining to the visceral rather than the cerebral and includes such characteristics as comically exaggerated characters, violent slapstick, the comic grotesque and scatological humour. It is the kind of humour that Bakhtin relates to the

⁴⁰ Whilst appreciating John Simon’s comment in *Six Tales from Popular Literature* (1998) that a one-penny chapbook was still an expensive purchase for most ordinary people, testimony such as that of John Raine, John Clare and many others does suggest that children from the lower classes did have access to these texts (whether purchased, gifted or shared).

⁴¹ Roscoe and Brimmell (1981) divide their analysis of James Lumsden’s works into different categories pertaining to children’s chapbooks and also a section on “chapbooks proper” that encompasses Lumsden’s cheap works to which the authors attribute an adult audience.

work of Rabelais and to the mode of the carnivalesque. It is often perceived in opposition to ‘high’ forms of humour such as satire and irony, although in reality many humorous texts and productions mix both these modes. As I have discussed in Chapters 2 and 3, this type of physical humour had little place in eighteenth-century discussions of the comic and indeed although, as Gatrell and Dickie indicate in their studies, scatological and cruel humour proliferated despite objections to it, such non-cerebral modes of humour were often eclipsed from polite discourse and were especially problematic in regard to children. The 1708 text *The History of Genesis* talks about “vain Books, profane Ballads, and filthy songs” filling the heads of children with “wanton Thoughts, and nasty and obscene Discourse” (qtd. in Grenby, 2007, p. 283), whilst in the mid 1880s John Ashton in *Chapbooks of the Eighteenth Century* thought the “extremely coarse witticisms” of the jest books were “utterly incapable of being reproduced for general reading nowadays” (1882, p. xi). There is a large dose of cultural relativism in Ashton’s comment that is also echoed in William Hazlitt’s essay ‘Merry England’ (1825) in which the author muses on the relationship between educational progress, social class and humour in stating that: “It is possible that a greater refinement of manners may give birth to finer distinctions of satire and a nicer tact for the ridiculous” (p. 21). He goes on to say that nations often lose sight of the “angular points and grotesque qualities” of humour with progress in “education and [social] intercourse” (p. 21). Hazlitt’s essay is centred upon a reclamation of the rural pastimes of the “common people” and his essay popularised the term “merry England” as shorthand for the type of nostalgic depiction of a simple, pre-industrial life that I have discussed in connection with the Christmas annuals. The type of humour Hazlitt discusses here is likewise an idealised version of the ‘low’ humour of the chapbook. It excludes elements of lewdness and scatological humour but retains

the comic grotesque, the exaggerated characters and the physicality of humour based on elements of slapstick (Hazlitt goes on to talk about “clowns and fools” (p. 22)). It is part of a projection of the “common people” as representative of a typical ‘English’ humour built upon freedom and idiosyncrasy; a people, as Hazlitt condescendingly terms it, full of “glee and merriment”, a “sort of grown up children” (p. 17).

In reality, the low humour of the chapbooks, even in the early nineteenth century was much less idealised than Hazlitt’s depiction. *The Witty and Entertaining Exploits of George Buchanan* printed by Lumsden in 1822, for example, and roughly contemporary with Hazlitt’s essay, contains an extended narrative on farting, whilst *The Comical History of Simple John and his Twelve Misfortunes* (credited to Dougal Graham in the later 1700s but reprinted up to 1850) relates anecdotes involving the titular John finding a wife. Some examples of the many tricks played on this character during this quest included John kissing a cow, having his clothes stolen whilst swimming naked and being exorcised for his apparent foolishness. The cruelty of humour expunged from Hazlitt’s account, but attested to by Dickie, is also evidenced in the latter text with an extended passage on the physical deformities of John’s wife: “Girzy the eldest had a hump-back, a high breast, baker legged, a short wry neck, thrawn, mouth, goggle- ey’d; a perfect Aesop of the female kind” (c. 1835, p. 3).

James Lumsden sold such chapbooks alongside the new range of cheap children’s books that this publisher printed from the early to mid 1800s. In their annotated bibliography of Lumsden’s works, Roscoe and Brimmell hypothesize that although in theory such books widened the publisher’s market, “catering for the poor as well as the well-to-do”, such unrefined humour as evidenced above might have, “brought them into some disfavour with the better educated class of buyers, who would not think well of a firm which could turn out stupidity and dirt, along with

epitomes of the Bible and Watts’ Divine Songs” (1981, p. 98). The idea that education brought a move away from plebeian humour is common in the history of chapbook criticism and echoes Ashton and to a certain extent Hazlitt’s assertion above that tastes in humour followed a linear progression from base to more refined. Indeed, as Gatrell notes, James Beattie also references a similar point concluding, “The history of humour was a history of progress [...] it improved alongside, and indicted, the improvement in manners” (Gatrell. 2006, p. 171). Such a narrative also follows the enlightenment trajectory of the possibility of the perfectibility of society through man’s own self-discipline and self-improvement and particularly through the rational education of the child. In this way, humour is tasked with a serious role in this discourse of ‘improvement’.

Hazlitt’s essay however, tempers the complete exorcism of low humour with a redefinition of this comic ‘residue’ in line with the amiable humourist mode. As Raymond Williams terms it, Hazlitt consciously ‘revives’ elements of the past in a “deliberately specializing way” (1977, p. 122), allowing for idiosyncrasy and grotesque features but expunging lewdness, permitting slapstick because, “we are the only people left who understand and relish nonsense” (Hazlitt, 1825, p. 22), and importantly, creating a specific English humour that is “not the mirth of vice or desperation, but of innocence and a native wildness” (p. 23). It is no accident that Hazlitt’s vocabulary in this essay merges the image of the “English common people” with the child (“a sort of grown up children” (p. 17)) and furthermore with the idea of “wildness” and “innocence”⁴². As I have discussed in Chapters 2 and 3 this lexicon of ‘innocent’ amusement is also the discourse of the amiable humourist mode, and is

⁴² Williams also notes that “the ideal or rural community is predominantly residual, but it is in some limited respects alternative or oppositional to urban industrial capitalism, although for the most part it is incorporated, as idealization or fantasy, or as an exotic - residual or escape - leisure function of the dominant order itself” (1977, p. 122).

particularly connected to the laughter of children. The “lively impulses” and “wayward humours” (p. 16) then of the common people’s literature becomes an ideal residual form of humour, in Hazlitt’s narrative, to inform a mode of print destined for the “common” people’s children.

The resulting children’s chapbooks, however, were not homogenous, and different examples, often in the same texts, foreground elements of the idealisation of plebeian humour expounded by Hazlitt alongside some of the traditional (and more crude) examples of the humour of the body that Bakhtin celebrates in Rabelais’ work and in the medieval carnival. James Kendrew’s *The Cheerful Warbler, or, Juvenile Song Book*, dating from around 1820 is one such example. This juvenile chapbook costing around one penny, reproduces traditional verses such as a version of ‘Oranges and Lemons’ and ‘Little Jack Horner’ matched with a woodcut illustration. Many of the poems are simple, yet are sometimes imbued with a nonsensical humour that fits Hazlitt’s discussion of the English ability to “relish nonsense”. Hazlitt’s definition of “nonsense” here does not conform to the concept of literary nonsense with which a modern reader might be familiar in the writing of, for example, Lewis Carroll. Rather, in Hazlitt’s essay nonsense means that which literally makes no sense, and this type of humour is closely allied to buffoonery and visual/oral humour. In this respect nonsense as a form of low humour lies in opposition to the ‘high’, intellectual form of nonsense in Carroll’s work where it is linked to the written word and displays a high degree of linguistic awareness to create a work with a deep structure of sense underpinning a surface of non-sense. This alternative definition is evident, for example, in the absurdities of the ‘Little Husband’:

I had a little husband.
 No bigger than my thumb,
 I put him in a pint pot.
 And there I bade him drum;
 I gave him a pair of garters.
 To garter up his hose,
 And a little handkerchief
 To wipe his dirty nose. (p. 9)

The iambs in each line mirror natural speech and echo better-known rhymes of popular culture such as “I had a little nut tree”. Each pair of lines has no narrative relation to the preceding or the following points: the husband is tiny so the wife puts him in a “pint pot” but for some unnoted reason she asks him to begin to drum, she then presents him with some garters to hold up his socks that the reader was unaware were falling down and a handkerchief to wipe his seemingly dirty nose. The lines together make a kind of (implausible) narrative but the story is entirely devoid of literary ‘sense’. However, although these lines are naïve in their lack of sense, at other points in the same collection, the verses contain muted references to sex and to drinking - subjects that in their cruder forms drew more vehement opposition to children reading traditional chapbook literature. In ‘The Little Man and Maid’, for example, the former “woo'd a little maid” and “he said little maid, will you wed, wed, wed, / I’ve little more to say, / But will you, yea or nay, / Will you make a little print in my bed, bed, bed” (p. 14). This dialogue is echoed in John Evans’ story of *Jacky Jingle and Suky Shingle* in a chapbook of a similar date (c. 1818) that outlines their courtship and ends with Jacky asking: “says he, shall we mingle/ Our toes in the bed;/ Fye! Jacky Jingle, / Says little Suky Shingle, / We must try to mingle, / Our pence for some bread” (p.10). Back in Kendrew’s collection, the rhyme of ‘The Grenadier’ textualises an abridged comic dialogue between a landlord and his customer, the

“drunken sot”, Grenadier (Fig. 4.1), whilst ‘The Drummer and Sot’ (Fig. 4.2) also features a nonsensical and repetitive verse about drunkenness - a not uncommon feature in both cheap and more expensive children’s text of this period⁴³.

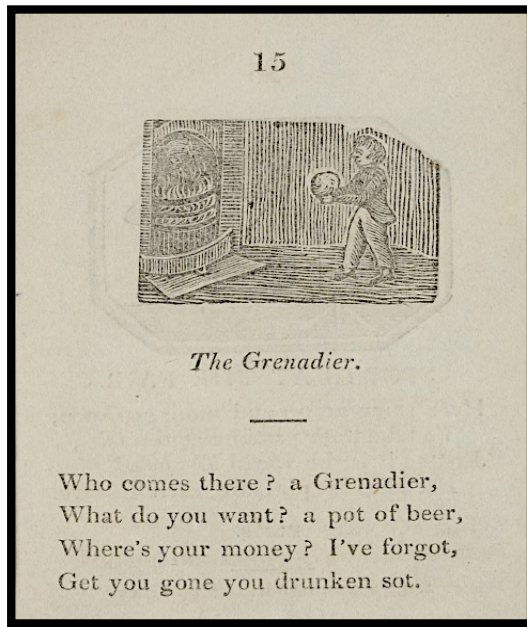


Fig.4.1. [Anon] Plate from *The Cheerful Warbler, or Juvenile Song Book*. York: James Kendrew, c.1820, p. 12

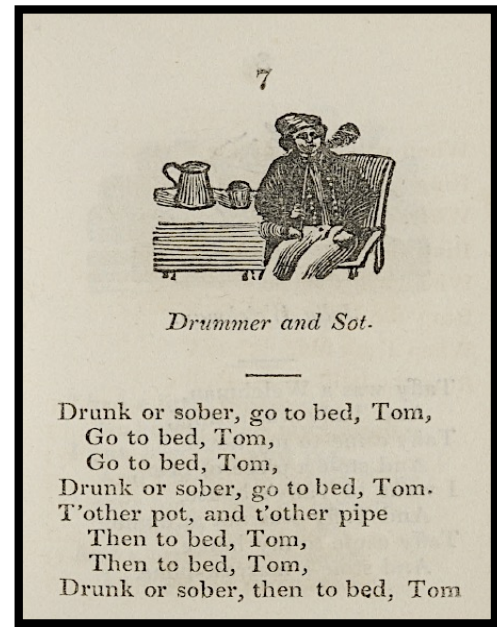


Fig. 4.2. [Anon] Plate from *The Cheerful Warbler, or Juvenile Song Book*. York: James Kendrew, c.1820, p. 16

Such examples are by no means the ribald comedy of many original chapbooks, but neither are they examples of the sophisticated humour that I have discussed in the papillonades. Instead they illustrate the residue of plebeian humour in the mode of the children’s chapbook and beyond.

Similarly, the riddle book is an ever-present sub-genre of original chapbook literature and in many instances contained frequent innuendo and scatological/sexual subject matter such as in the following examples from *Whetstone for Dull Wits* (c. 1790):

⁴³ See for example, Didier and Tebbet’s *The Account of the Old Woman who Sold fruit: Showing how she got Topsy her fruit stolen, and her reformation*. (1807) and. *Vicissitude or the Life and Adventure of Ned Frolic* (1818) which contains a 23 verse drinking song

Q. I am white and stiff it is well known.
Likewise my Nose is red;
Young ladies will, as well as Joan
Oft take me to their Bed.

A. *It is a Candle.*

Q. One Mouth, one Nose, two charming eyes
Two Feet, two Hands, two Heads likewise

A. *A Young Virgin, whose Natural Head and Maidenhead make two.* (p. 2 original emphasis)

However, the desire to draw together traditional chapbook subjects with an educational agenda in the new form of the children’s chapbook, necessitated the preservation of the riddle book form but with a clear expunging of such innuendos in favour of more edifying puzzles pertaining to everyday objects. *Gammar Gurton’s Garland of Nursery Songs and Toby Tickle’s Collection of Riddles compiled by Peter Puzzlecap esq.*, for example was sold by James Lumsden in 1815-20 for tuppence and was according to Roscoe and Brimmell “a most popular production” (1981, p 18)⁴⁴. It is a composite book of nursery rhymes, songs and puzzles. The riddles section is prefaced by the figure of Peter Puzzlecap himself, a kindly gentleman sitting in a chair who in line with the orality of folk culture is portrayed as asking riddles to his juvenile audience over “nut-brown cakes and mugs of ale” (p. 15) (Fig. 4.3).

⁴⁴ See Roscoe and Brimmell (1981. pp. 17-18) for dating and refutation of illustrations by Thomas Berwick

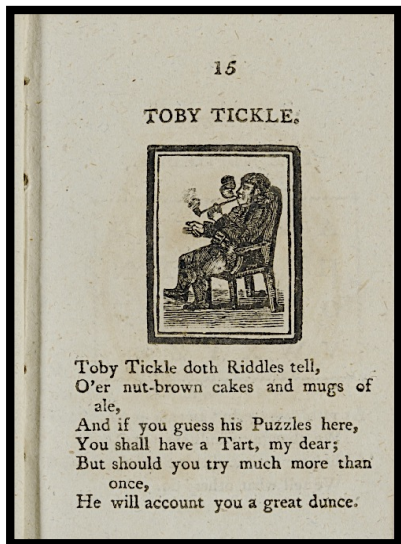


Fig. 4.3. [Anon.] Plate from *The Cheerful Warbler, or Juvenile Song Book*. York: James Kendrew, c.1820, p. 16.



Fig. 4.4. [Anon.] Plate from *The Cheerful Warbler, or Juvenile Song Book*. York: James Kendrew, c.1820, p. 23

Such a domestic and comfortable setting for this section, enlivened with food and drink, retains an essence of the middle-class Christmas fireside within this less affluent locale (see Chapter 3). In the text, Toby Tickle proffers a reward to his juvenile audience of a “tart” for guessing the correct answer, but the epithet of a “dunce” if the children have to “try more than once”. As the following textual riddles are all prefaced by an illustration that makes clear the answer (Fig. 4.4), the game is redundant when read on the page, inviting the reader to play a ‘live’ version of the game with other participants, (including perhaps an adult) and in this way recreate Toby Tickle’s role as ‘compere’. The entertainment value of the text has a double representation, firstly through Toby Tickle’s light-hearted instructions and the amenable setting, and secondly through the active participant of the child reader in the game. The text partakes in the same mode of amusement with instruction that is ubiquitous in texts aimed at more affluent readers.

However, this interplay of an Enlightenment pedagogic agenda within cheaper

children’s literature is often a complex phenomenon. In John Catnach’s *Jack Jingle* (c. 1820) for example, the humorous verses and illustrations have the potential to undercut the final rational message. The text begins: “Little Jack Jingle, / Played truant from school, / They made his bum tingle / For being a fool;” (p. 1) (Fig. 4.5)

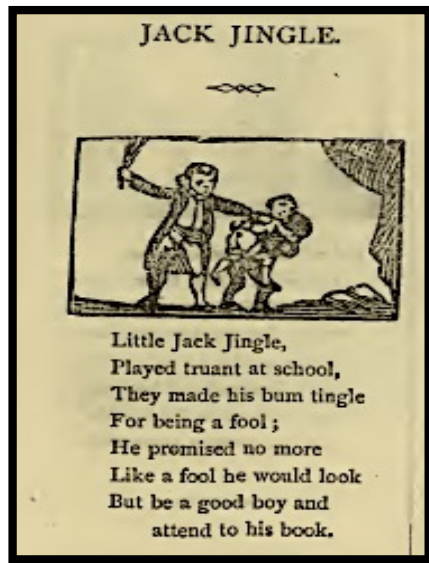


Fig. 4.5 [Anon.] Plate from *Jack Jingle*.
 London: John Catnach, c. 1820, p.1.

The accompanying woodcut shows a bare-bottomed Jack receiving the birch whilst piggybacking another child. Even though Jack is being punished here for his buffoonery, the scatological image and vocabulary have the potential to amuse more than instruct. In a similar way, the same publisher’s version of *Jerry Diddle and his Fiddle* (c. 1820) employs simple end rhymes and frequent internal rhymes (“He went to the pig and play’d a jig” (p. 2)) to reflect in verse Jerry’s infectious music played on a folk instrument. An integral part of the chapbook’s design, the woodcuts humorously depict the various comic (and often nonsensical) acts that Jack provokes by playing his fiddle (Figs. 4.6, 4.7 & 4.8):

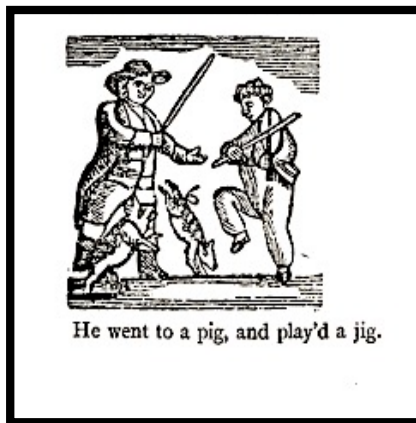


Fig. 4.6. [Anon.] Plate from *Jerry Diddle and His Fiddle*. London: John Catnach, c.1820, p. 2.

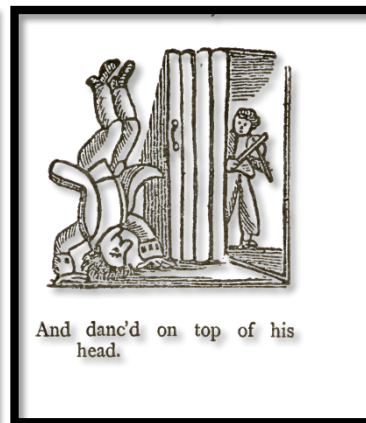


Fig. 4.7. [Anon.] Plate from *Jerry Diddle and His Fiddle*. London: John Catnach, c.1820, p. 5.

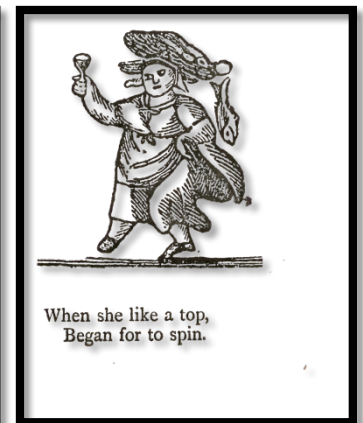


Fig. 4.8. [Anon.] Plate from *Jerry Diddle and His Fiddle*. London: John Catnach, c.1820, p. 10.

Again there are many references to drinking, eating and dancing, a comic whirl that comes to end only by the appearance of “Instruction”, personified as a man with a “beard long and white” who breaks Jack’s fiddle and “scoff’d at his song”. Instead of playing the instrument. Jack now learns to read and becomes “a lad/ At school/ The joy of his friends/ And a pattern for you (p. 15). The final plate (Fig. 4.9) shows Jack at school avoiding the “folly’s snare” of a frivolous life. Here escaping care is shown, unlike in *The Whetstone for Dull Wits*, to be established through learning rather than through amusement and leisure.

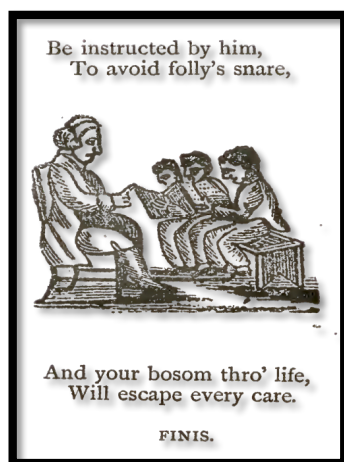


Fig. 4.9. [Anon.] Plate from *Jerry Diddle and His Fiddle*. London: John Catnach, c.1820, p. 16.

Jack Jingle is a text that retains the concentration in low humour on visceral comedy, particularly depicted through the simple woodcut designs, but which also engages with more instructional books for children. Whether the attraction of the first 14 pages of the chapbook undermines the pedagogy of the final pages, or whether the pedagogy overtakes the humour of the final section is a debatable point. However, the fact remains that many of the humorous features of traditional chapbook texts along with their songs, riddles and eponymous characters drawn from oral culture - Jack Jingle, Old Mother Hubbard, Tom Thumb, are evidence of a nineteenth-century preoccupation with folk culture that is apparent in Hazlitt’s essay and which is not necessarily in opposition to Enlightenment pedagogy and rational ideology. It is the type of “refashioning of materials and practices” (2002, p. 68) discussed by Bolter and Grusin in *Remediation*. The desire in economic terms of children’s chapbook publishers to create a form of literature that drew on a new market potential necessitated “borrowing and adapting” (p. 68) from other successful forms, namely the humour of the chapbook and the pedagogy of the children’s book. This point is also particularly relevant in a physical and monetary sense in that the borrowing of stories from both literatures, from *Mother Hubbard* to *Goody Two Shoes*, allowed publishers to maximise profits on an original product for minimum outlay, thus illustrating, as Bolter and Grusin remark, “the inseparability of the economic from the social and material” (p. 68). My next section brings together the complexities of the competing discourses discussed above by interrogating a variety of texts aimed at differing juvenile audiences built around the same narrative - the story of Dame Trot and her Cat. In this way the remediation of humour as a dialogic exchange can be clearly illustrated, as can the importance of humour to children of all social classes.

What’s in a Dame? Children’s Chapbooks, Children’s Books and Dame Trot

The publishing history of the many versions of the ‘Old Dame Trot’ story is almost as elusive as the title character of the book. Drawn from oral culture and probably in oral circulation almost a century before the first printed editions appeared in the early 1800s, the narrative tells the simple story of the amusing and often nonsensical interaction of Old Dame Trot and her pet cat. According to catalogue sources, in 1803 the London publisher T. Evans published a text entitled *Old Dame Trot and Her Comical Cat*. The accurate dating of this edition is open to question, but there is a verifiable 1811, penny version, collected with other works by J. Evans in a tiny volume in the British Library, London⁴⁵. This edition, which is in turn very similar in content to a more expensive 1806 text published by John Harris - and which possibly may be the ur-text, tells the tale of the titular cat who is frequently left at home whilst her owner/companion, Dame Trot, runs domestic errands. Each reappearance at home by the old lady is a trigger for the cat to be found performing various household tasks and other amusing activities. Puss spins, sews and makes a pie, as well as plays the fiddle, smokes a pipe, rides on a dog and fights a duel. The narrative ends with the cat dressing up in a hat and a dress in imitation of a lady:

⁴⁵ The two catalogued versions of Evans 1803 edition are in the Bodleian Library, Oxford - an edition that does not seem to exist in reality, and one in the UCLA children’s literature collection that I have been unable to verify is actually dated 1803 rather than dated from other evidence. Marjorie Moon also cites the same issues with dating this text in her work on John Harris (see Moon. 1976). According to the British Book Trades Index. T and J Evans were probably related, and were operating at a similar time and from premises in close proximity in Long Lane, London.

She trotted once more.
To buy her a tart.
When she came back
PUSS was dress’d very smart (1806, p. 15)

Both Harris and Evans’ narratives are structured very much as a young child’s game of peek-a-boo with each turn of the page initiating a new and surprising occupation for the cat. Each activity is unconnected with the previous so that each page and accompanying illustration (which in Evans’ version do not occur on every page) forms a ‘tableau’ type sequence. Humour is generated from the ridiculous nature of the cat performing household chores, but particularly from the incongruousness of the cat smoking a pipe or fighting a duel with the dog. In a similar way to the narrative of *Jack Jingle*, no ‘backstory’ is given as to why the cat should be engaged in these activities and the cumulative effect of one scene after the other, with the regular quatrains and simple and repetitive rhyme, heightens both the anticipation of the reader from one page to the next and the humour of the narrative that becomes more and more outlandish as the text progresses. In an echo of Harris’ other contemporaneous text, *Old Mother Hubbard* (1805), at one point the cat is even found dead by Dame Trot only to miraculously revive when Trot returns with a coffin⁴⁶. The involvement and interrelation of Evans and Harris in the publishing history of the Dame Trot narrative is a good example of how in this early nineteenth-century era, the industry for texts written for children often crossed class boundaries and blurred the lines between high and low culture. Despite depicting, essentially, the same story, the two versions are materially very different. Evans’ text is printed on very cheap paper, the text is hardly readable in places and the woodcuts are crude line drawings.

⁴⁶ If Harris’ text not Evans’ version is the earlier text then *Dame Trot* could have drawn on Sarah Catherine Martin’s *Old Mother Hubbard*, if Evan’s work is earlier, then *Dame Trot* could be an influence on *Mother Hubbard*

Harris’ text on the other hand, is beautifully printed and illustrated. It was available coloured as well as plain and neatly bound. The price reflected the quality of these products; Evans’ text is not priced, but from evidence of other texts in the publisher’s repertoire it can be assumed that the price was ½ or 1d at the most. Harris however, charged one shilling for uncoloured books and 18d for the coloured versions. Evans’ customer base was certainly of more modest means - readers who would have been excluded from purchasing Harris’ books - yet both publishers share a common subject matter in the Dame Trot narrative and in many other texts. Comparing other versions of Dame Trot reiterates the accessibility of this story for all classes of readers. In 1807 W & T Darton, a children’s publisher of comparable quality if not rather more conservative bent than Harris, evidently also saw the potential in the Dame Trot story, publishing *The Moving Adventures of Old Dame Trot and Her Comical Cat*. The following year Darton followed Harris’ sequel, *A Continuation of the Adventures of Old Dame Trot and Her Comical Cat* (1806) with his own *Continuation of The Moving Adventures of Old Dame Trot and Her Comical Cat* (1807). Like Harris’ text, Darton’s *Continuation* is advertised at 1s plain or 1s 6d coloured. In 1818 Harris produced a different version of the story that was frequently reprinted in the 1820s and in later years. Indeed, the reach of Dame Trot was impressive. Both cheaper and costlier versions were prevalent throughout the early part of the nineteenth century. There were several low-priced London editions emanating from publishers such as T. Batchelar and John Bysh. Inexpensive chapbook versions were also published in many provincial towns: by Rusher in Banbury. William Walker in North Yorkshire, Ross in Edinburgh and by West and Coldwells in Cork, Ireland. There were also several variants printed for the US market, a version in French dating from 1858 and a German translation printed in Mainz by J. Schultz (Muir, 1946, p. 63). What the reach

of this story shows is that a wide cross section of literate families and children across the social classes had access to the same basic comic story drawn from a figure of popular culture. What is also particularly striking about these texts is the nature of what Grenby terms the “piratical and incestuous world of children’s book publishing in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries”⁴⁷. Without strict copyright laws, and bearing in mind the need to maximize profit margins in cheaper texts, works produced in this era were often fair game for ‘piracy’ and the “Hubbards” as Mary Jackson dubs them, were no exception being often “pirated in chapbooks and widely imitated” (1989, p. 200). However, what a statement such as this fails to take into account is the, often extensive, remediation of the narrative and the humour in different variant texts. Dame Trot as a figure of popular culture is often appropriated by publishers of expensive and cheaper texts alike and remediated both visually and textually to serve varied ideological purposes. In Darton’s *Continuation* for example, the cat in the story serves to illustrate waywardness redeemed through learning. The pages of humorous activities involve the cat playing skittles, milking an ass and cumulate in the feline finding herself a lover:

While the DAME was gone out.
To get a nice Tart,
Madam Puss had a lover.
Concealed in a Cart. (1807, p. 4)

The cat and her lover have kittens and finally all the brood are sent to school where they can no longer get up to the mischief of wearing the dame’s “best caps” (p. 15) or, bizarrely, “firing [...] guns” (p. 11) or “storming a fort” (p. 13). Instead the kittens are

⁴⁷ Quotation taken from Grenby’s response to request for information on the publishing history of Dame Trot made on the Humanities and Social Science Network Online (June 2001). See bibliography.

content, like good children, to “(l)earn [...] their books” (p. 16). The link between child reader and cat/kitten is strong and the (not so implicit) message is that education is the way to mould over-exuberant children into rational citizens. The narrative takes the, often nonsensical, narrative of the early versions of Dame Trot and rewrites the text to retain some of the original humour of the story, while bringing in a much clearer idea of morality. It is telling that each page in Darton’s *Continuation* functions as a kind of moral parable; with the addition of a summary word at the end of the verse, the publisher illustrates both vices and virtues in an amusing way. Thus “INDUSTRY” is represented by the cat and her lover “scouring the Pewter” (p. 5) whilst “MISCHIEF” is illustrated through the kittens trying on Dame Trot’s “best Caps” when she goes to answer the door (Figs. 4.10 and 4.11).

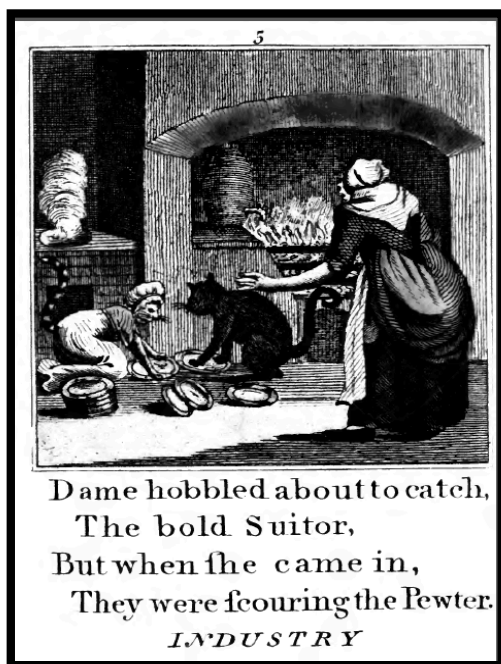


Fig. 4.10 [Anon.] Plate from *A Continuation of the Moving Adventures of Old Dame Trot and Her Comical Cat*. London: W. Darton, 1807, p. 5

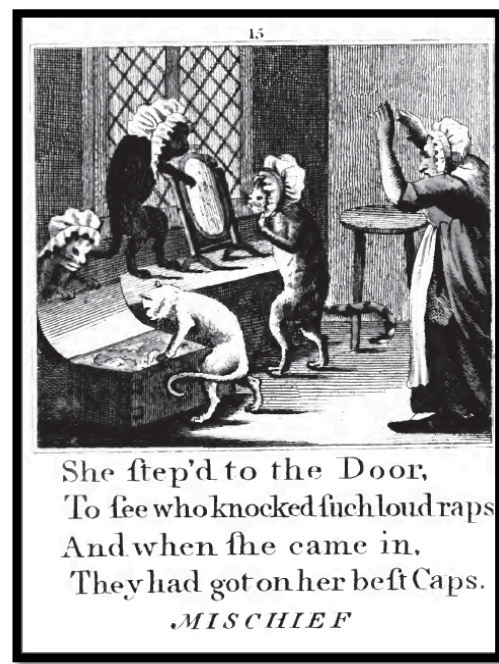


Fig. 4.11 [Anon.] Plate from *A Continuation of the Moving Adventures of Old Dame Trot and Her Comical Cat*. London: W. Darton, 1807, p. 15

Such use of popular culture in literature aimed at an affluent audience is further

evidence of what O'Malley, drawing on Raymond Williams, terms the “residue of plebeian culture” left in many children’s books of the later eighteenth century (2003, p. 26). And yet as I have already demonstrated and as Ian McCalman and Maureen Perkins state in their chapter on ‘Popular Culture’ in the *Oxford Companion to the Romantic Age*, the traditional interpretation of the struggle between binaries of elite/plebeian; high/low; polite/vulgar can dangerously “elide the considerable degree of cultural appropriation and exchange that took place amongst different social groupings” (1999, p. 216).

Indeed, this is evidenced in John Harris’ 1818 rewriting of (arguably his own) Dame Trot narrative. In contrast to Darton’s relatively straightforward appropriation of Dame Trot, in Harris’ version the publisher uses this figure of folk culture to mediate the gap between high and low culture and poke fun at learning and education. Harris draws on Trot as an eponymous folkloric concept, but also, from the very subtitle of the book, creates a metatext surrounding the old Dame that humorously complicates the lowly pedigree of this character⁴⁸. The subtitle of the text reads ‘from the original in the Hubbardian library’. Here, Harris suggests an authentic and historically based manuscript for his work that is entirely undermined by the fact that Old Mother Hubbard is in the first place part of folk culture rather than part of highbrow literature⁴⁹. Harris plays here with the Romantic cult of originality and authenticity triggered by the debate surrounding James MacPherson’s Ossian manuscripts that lingered into the early nineteenth century⁵⁰. Here the cult of authenticity is a subject of amusement which asks for a prior degree of knowledge from his readership, not only concerning the ur-text of *Old Mother Hubbard* and the

⁴⁸ OED: “Metatext: A text lying outside another text, especially one describing or elucidating another”.

⁴⁹ Harris also produces an extra-textual life for Mother Hubbard with a similar ‘portrait’ in this work

⁵⁰ For a detailed analysis of this controversy see Curley, 2009 and Haywood, 1986.

previous versions of *Dame Trot*, but also regarding the crossover of high and low culture and perceived values of literary worthiness that originality was considered to denote. As Bolter and Grusin suggest, each new form, or in this case text, “takes part of its meaning from the other products” (p. 68). There is an intertextuality that becomes an imbedded and necessary part of the interpretation process. The middle-class adult reader might laugh at this ridiculous elevation of a folk figure into an object of literary value, whilst a child might simultaneously delight in the importance accorded to the subject of a book written specifically for a juvenile audience. The reader might also derive satisfaction in spotting the intertextual reference to *Old Mother Hubbard*. The humour in this case then becomes predicated on exclusivity: only those well-read enough to have originally come across Harris’ *Old Mother Hubbard* and well educated enough to understand the gentle satire at work can participate in the humour. However, at the same time as all these subtly different types of humour are taking place, Harris is also undermining the very subject of antiquarianism itself. The text laughs at the way in which folk culture has been elevated to academic and serious levels. Even the illustration of Dame Trot is termed a ‘portrait’ taken from “an original painting” (Fig. 4.12).



Fig. 4.12. [Anon.] Plate from *The Comic Adventures of Old Dame Trot and Her Cat*. London: J. Harris, 1820, frontispiece.

Here the intangible qualities of folk figures such as these old dames are manifested as permanent and ‘worthy’ through the medium of art and literature. And yet the “grotesque qualities” of the portrait here (Hazlitt, 1825, p. 21) also reference Bakhtinian carnival and the elemental humour of the feast. Harris’ humour in this text seems to follow the line of cultural relativism, becoming more refined in proportion to the cost of his text and the education of his audience, however it also cleverly incorporates the “mixed state of manners”, high and low humour, under which according to Hazlitt “comic humour chiefly flourishes” (1825, p. 21). In merging the high and the low together in one image Harris’ text is able to poke fun at both.

The text also belies an ambiguous attitude towards learning and education. The illustration of the anthropomorphised cat on the front cover of the book (Fig. 4.13) who is holding a quill and book and is surrounded by art materials, is envisioned in the mode of the ‘child prodigy’ - a figure popular around this period and one which was both revered as a cipher for a rational education and derided as a precocious child prematurely stuffed with facts and figures⁵¹.

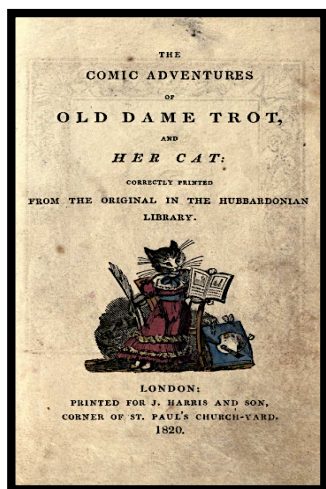


Fig. 4.13. [Anon.] Plate from *The Comic Adventures of Old Dame Trot and Her Cat*. London: J. Harris, 1820, title page

⁵¹ See the introduction to Gubar, 2009 for a discussion of the cipher of the precocious child and its wider relevance to the nineteenth century

This illustration fits with the many ‘un-cat’ like activities which the animal pursues in the narrative; cooking, dancing, riding and so on, but also incorporates the cat/child as active participant in, if not producer of, literature. The quill and book suggest some sort of engagement in the process of writing Harris’ narrative and this links to the active direct address to child readers that involves them in the narrative (“you behold”, “you see...”). Harris appears to have created a learned cat for a learned middle-class reader who can actively participate in creating a new narrative based on the old, through knowledge of the metatextual features of the folkloric debate and who can appreciate the humour contained therein.

And yet, the narrative ‘penned’ by Harris (and the cat) concentrates not only upon erudition and high art, but is also concerned with domestic tasks and physical humour that brings the text back to the plebeian humour of the folktale. The cat cooks, dances and drinks as much as she dresses herself in fine clothes and plays the flute. Indeed, at the centre of the narrative is a section where the Dame, the cat and the dog all get drunk. After eating, Dame Trot states “I wish we’d liquor too” (p. 5) and the cat withdraws to uncork some wine. Dame, Cat and Dog seem to become tipsy and the cat begins an amusing performance:

The wine got up in Pussy’s head.
She would not go to bed;
But purr’d and tumbled, leap’d and danc’d.
And stood upon her head (p. 6)

Old Goody laugh’d to see the sport.
As though her sides would crack;
When puss, without a single word,
Leap’d on the spaniel’s back (p. 7)

The humour here is physical with the cat jumping and dancing. The evocation of Dame Trot laughing, “as though her sides would crack” is exactly the kind of “audible

laughter” that Lord Chesterfield condemns in his letters as “ill-bred” (2008, p.72). Of course Dame Trot is a character drawn from plebeian culture, yet this appearance in a text aimed at an affluent juvenile audience gives a tacit validation to both physical humour and the corporeal manifestation of laughter. Whereas in the papillonnades, scenes of dancing, drinking and gambling are used to satirise the upper classes, here similar behaviour is presented as part of the amusement of the narrative. The drunken sequence described above presents a plebeian world without malice but with humour and fun.

Such visceral qualities are also preserved in the many chapbook mediations of the story that appeared in the first decades of the nineteenth century. Here, as in Harris’ text, an interesting mixture of high and low culture and different kinds of humour are present, as well as a cherry-picking of different episodes that appear in a variety of versions of the Dame Trot story. What an analysis of these cheaper chapbook versions of the basic story of the old woman and her cat reveal is a world where Bolter and Grusin’s web of “affiliations” produce new works of art which were available to a less affluent as well as a more moneyed audience. William Rusher’s text *The Renowned History of Dame Trot and Her Cat* published in Banbury around 1820 and retailing at ½ d is the text that reinterpreted the traditional Dame Trot absence and reappearance narrative the most widely. Perhaps in line with Edwin Pearson’s assertion in *Banbury Chapbooks* that Rusher displayed “some ingenuity and originality of his own, and was not such a plagiarist and imitator as some of his contemporaries” (1890, p. 24), this publisher expands Harris’/Evans’ narrative considerably, envisaging Dame Trot as the cat’s teacher who finding the animal hard to manage at home, sends her to school:

And she lapp'd up her milk
And she laughed at all rule.
Till Dame Trot was obliged
To send pussy to school, (p. 4)

At school puss “learned better manners” and the cats “stitched, learnt lessons, / Were as busy as bees.” (p. 5) Such a description has much in common with Darton’s much more expensive *Continuation of Dame Trot’s Adventures* as discussed above and seems to indicate a similar endorsement of a rational, pedagogic agenda onto a text that would on this occasion, have been accessible to a working-class audience. However, the narrative of Rusher’s text is a curious mix of physical fun and capers alongside this emphasis on proper behaviour and education. In another, rather confusing deviation from the earlier texts, the Dame is delighted with the cat’s progress at school and so invites the cat and her friends back for dinner “diversion and fun” (p. 7). One cat starts to play the fiddle to some mice and then:

Taught kittens quick hornpipes.
Quadrilles, polkas, and reels
They danced to the music
On their toes and their heels, (p. 8)

Other variants from the very beginning have contained a scene of the cat playing the fiddle, with this instrument, as in *Jack Diddle and His Fiddle*, drawn as a marker of folk culture. Rusher’s text, however, considerably expands this element, delighting in the extended description of the type of music and dancing. The accompanying illustration, though crude, also conveys the movement and vitality of the scene. (Fig. 4.14).

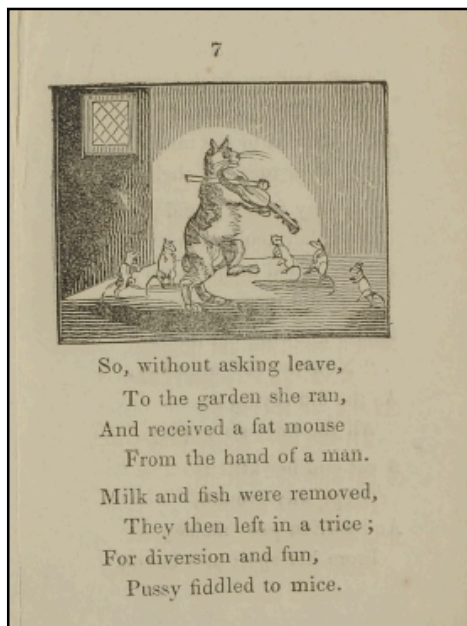


Fig. 4.14. [Anon.] Plate from *The Renowned History of Dame Trot and her Cat*. Banbury: J. G. Rusher, c.1820, p. 7

The narrative then reverts to the cat riding on a dog’s back. They go for a long walk “through the park and the grove” and are spotted by the Queen, prince and princesses on the way. The verse fluctuates between the anarchic energy of dancing kittens, cats parading on dogs and in a scene at a neighbouring farmhouse where the cats have rid the farmer of mice, a traditional may-day-esque impromptu fete:

[...1 the cats began dancing.
And Grimalkin to play;
As merry as kittens.
On a Midsummer day:
Masters, mistress, and maids.
And the men ‘gan to sing;
The sons and the daughters
Made the old farmhouse ring. (p. 13)

The merriment only ends when the cat, who is riding once more on the dog, is thrown off. This “caused some high words” between cat and dog and they “drew their swords” and “a duel was fought” (p. 14). The accompanying illustration (Fig. 4.15) shows the dog and cat engaged in this sword fight.

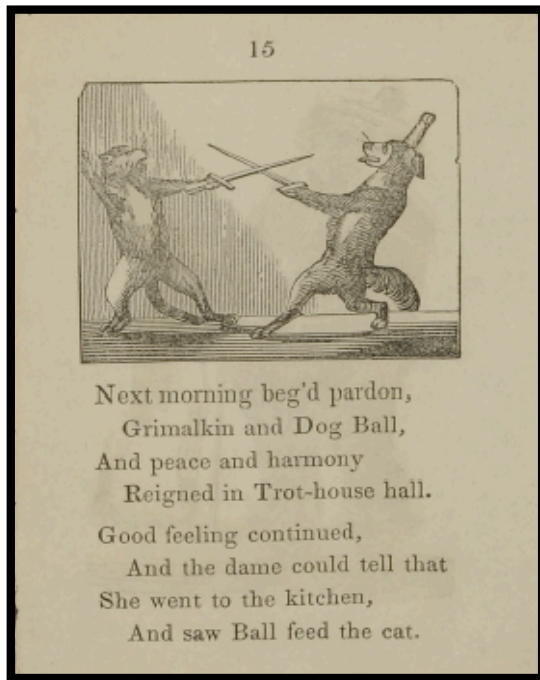


Fig. 4.15. [Anon.] Plate from *The Renowned History of Dame Trot and her Cat*. Banbury: J. G. Rusher, c.1820, p. 15

The misrule and chaotic nature of the narrative where cats, dogs, mice and humans all partake in the carnival space of fun and amusement is brought to an abrupt end by

Dame Trot and her stick:

She scolded them soundly,
 As to the Trot-house were led;
 Good beating she gave them.
 And she sent them to bed. (p. 14)

The figure of Dame Trot, then ring-fences the narrative and brings order to the proceedings. Just as in the beginning she has brought the cat under control by sending her to school, so at the end, the cat (and dog) are punished for an excess of merriment which gets out of control. Like the Lord of Misrule, Dame Trot restores “peace and harmony” and “[g]ood feeling continued” in the Trot house (p. 15). Rusher’s is a breathless and lengthy narrative that considerably expands the core Trot story to allow

for a moral message whilst also amplifying the comic potential in its digressions. In this way the publisher finds a method of merging both instruction and amusement within this inexpensive text.

William Walker of Otley, conversely, in his version of *Dame Trot and Her Comical Cat*, chooses to foreground amusement and exclude any potential for a moral pedagogy by emphasising the nonsensical and carnivalistic elements of the Trot narrative. In this text, the narrative opens with Dame Trot and the cat at the fair (which interestingly Harris expunges from his later version in favour of the domestic setting by the fireside). This scene in Walker’s text becomes the catalyst for a continuation of the fun of the fair within the domestic interior. The extended verse structure in Walker’s text: 4 x rhyming couplets as opposed to the regular verse quatrains of the other texts, allows for a certain elaboration of detail. Thus the first page states:

The Old Dame went to Brook-Green Fair,
And Puss accompanied her there;
When they arrived upon the ground.
Great was the noise that did abound;
Music and dancing had begun.
The Fool was striving to make fun;
‘Look yonder, Tib’ the Old Woman said.
The Fool is dancing with the Maid!’ (p. 2)

Like Rusher’s text, Walker’s work extends the narrative and widens out the domestic and formulaic scenes in many of these narratives to something a little less regulated. The text emphasises the sensual aspects of the fair with its “noise”, “music and dancing” and physical fun. This locus is evidently appealing to the characters with Dame Trot pointing out the Fool “dancing with the maid”. When the pair return home they talk about the “things they’d viewed with great delight” (p. 3). In this narrative the cat is given a voice (she is ostensibly silent in the other texts - merely a stock

image rather than a character) and suggests that they imitate the dancing and merriment that they have seen:

‘Old Dame’, said Tib, ‘can’t you and I
Dance well as they? come, let us try.’
Then they with glee did caper round,
‘Till each fell prostrate on the ground, (p. 3)

The dancing in Harris’ text that is shown to be as a result of drinking too much is here attributed to the influence of the fair. Walker’s text can be read as mediating the boundary between art and (popular) culture. As Bolter and Grusin state “because all mediations are both real and mediations of the real, remediation can also be understood as a process of reforming reality [...]” (2002, p. 56). Thus the locus of the fair as a representation of ‘living’ popular culture, figured real through reference to the specific and actual carnival event held at Brook Green, transcends its mere supporting role in other texts and becomes the catalyst for a remediated narrative that embraces the fun of the fair.

Moreover, the visceral humour to be found in all the *Dame Trot* texts was well known enough by the late 1830s that the story became remediated once again into the pantomime mode and produced at The Surrey Theatre on Boxing Day 1837 under the title *Harlequin and Dame Trot*. This production was quickly adapted by Skelt into the mode of the juvenile theatre, thereby assuring the continuation of *Dame Trot* in two different media and in terms of the pantomime version at least, in a mode that reached across social classes. Fig. 4.16 shows a detail from one of Skelt’s prints from the juvenile theatre illustrating Dame Trot’s cat sewing on a chair and dressing up as a lady, as well as Dame Trot spinning - an occupation that does not occur in any of the *Dame Trot* texts I have discussed.



Fig. 4.16. [Anon.] Plate from *Harlequin and Dame Trot*. (Juvenile Drama). London: W. Skelt, c. 1838.

From this incarnation of Dame Trot in the theatre and on the miniature stage, a further children's chapbook was then printed by the London publisher James Catnach, which although not dated, seems to depict Dame Trot envisaged in her theatrical role (Fig. 4.17), and as such potentially dates from the late 1830s.

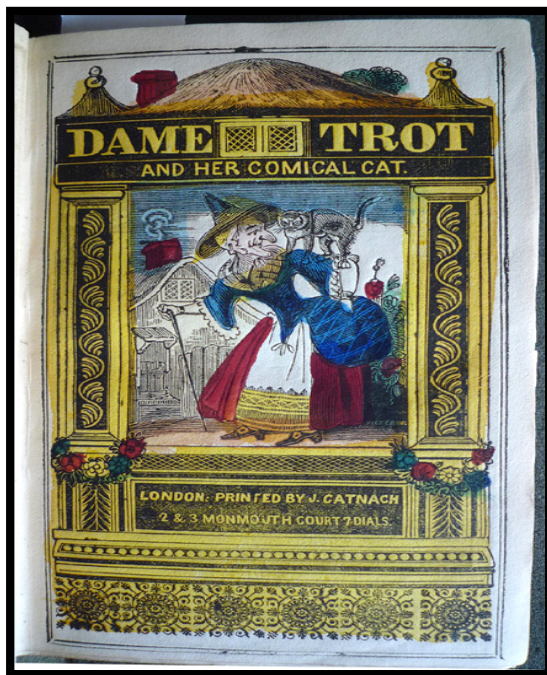


Fig. 4.17. [Anon.] Plate from *Dame Trot and Her Comical Cat*. London, J. Catnach, c. 1838. Frontispiece

Dame Trot as a figure of popular culture then, has been refashioned into literature aimed at both affluent and less wealthy children, and in turn into the dramatic mode and the medium of the toy theatre. This theatrical version was then remediated into a further chapbook for children selling at a penny and reflecting Dame Trot’s new incarnation on stage. Here as Bolter and Grusin state, the various forms have not replaced each other, but rather “spread the content over as many markets as possible”, each taking meaning from the other as they go (p. 68). Chapbook culture, then, has been as Grenby suggests, reinforced rather than replaced by more expensive works for children, but equally the residue of chapbook humour present in *Dame Trot* has had a profound impact on a wide range of print cultures for children. My discussion has shown how this figure has crossed both class and modal boundaries and continued to be a part of popular culture enjoyed by many children across the social spectrum until at least the end of the nineteenth century.

This Romantic preoccupation with folk culture and folk humour does not, however, simply stop at the visual and textual representations of this past time remediated for a child audience. Rather, the interest in the free spirit of play in popular culture, characterised by Hazlitt as indicative of a people free from tyranny, also becomes politicised in this period as under threat from increasing curbs on leisure time for the working classes. In my final section, analysis centres on texts for children in chapbooks and children’s books linked thematically by the trope of the fairground that has figured prominently in the Dame narratives above. This locus as a site of both pleasure and leisure and attractive to a wide cross section of society has plebeian roots in the medieval period and as such is imbued with carnival potential. As well as being a physical location of fun and humour, however, it is also a place of tension and anxiety where social classes rub up against each other in close proximity, and where

danger and delight are thrillingly near. For children the fair was a treat as well as a risk, and the representation of the fair in literature of this period is a fascinating mix of humorous enticement and serious warning.

All the Fun of the Fair

The remediation of the Dame Trot narrative illustrates the complex nature of the early nineteenth-century’s relationship with humour for a juvenile audience. As part of folk culture Dame Trot functions as a cross-over figure linking the plebeian origins of the chapbook with literature aimed at both a wealthy juvenile market and the newly emerging sector of less affluent children. My final section adds a further dimension to this analysis by interrogating how literature for children assimilates a theme at the heart of living folk culture - the fairground. The locale of the fairground is one predicated on pleasure and enjoyment and the multifarious attractions contained therein, particularly the “comic shows”, “clowns and fools, giants, dwarfs, and jugglers” that are also, according to Mikhail Bakhtin, part of the popular humour of the medieval carnival (1984, p. 5; p.4). For Bakhtin the carnival locus represents an opportunity for the common people to realise an escape from work and life and to revel in the freedom of laughter, a laughter where hierarchies are overturned and real-life forgotten for a space of time - the fairground is a similarly considered space. In the early nineteenth century, however, fairs such as Bartholomew’s in London were becoming increasingly constrained by concerns over violence and crime that were the supposed result of the prevalence of alcohol and the presence of the unruly crowds at the fairground. Although all social classes continued to partake in the attractions of the carnival there was increasing opposition to these large gatherings, and many

reviews link the perceived low humour of the fairground shows and the physical pleasure of the attractions with degeneracy and criminal activity. And yet, in literature for children, in juvenile chapbooks as well as books aimed at a more affluent market, the fairground frequently appears as a source of pleasure and excitement for young people of all classes, and the humorous discourse that surrounds the fair is integrated into stories that portray both positive and negative views of this space. The interaction of a mix of social classes at the fairground is also a source of both amusement and danger in the literature that I analyse and this aspect is particularly interesting given the accessibility of many of these texts to a wide audience across the social spectrum.

Since the inception in the Medieval period of London fairs such as Bartholomew’s as a site of pilgrimage and celebration, the locus of the fairground has been widely represented in both visual and textual form. The unique opportunity presented by the fair for social classes to form part of a simultaneously homogenous yet heterogeneous crowd has held considerable fascination for artists and writers over several centuries. As Benjamin Heller states in his essay on the fairground crowd, “while evidence of just who did go to fairs is fragmentary and sparse, it does appear that all London’s classes were represented - from the royal family all the way down to street urchins and the desperately poor” (2010, p. 140). The double-edged potential of the interaction of different social groups within the crowd for both comedy and danger has often proved irresistible to artists and writers. Ben Jonson for example in his 1614 play *Bartholomew Fayre* relies on this unique social situation outside of the realms of everyday life, with its heady mix of visceral pleasures, to engineer his comic satire on human nature. In a similar fashion, William Hogarth’s depiction of Southwark Fair in his painting ‘The Humours of the Fair’ (1733) mixes the comic with the grotesque to depict allegorically the (base) nature of man. The commonly

held view that Hogarth’s painting is a prelude to his satirical vision of human debasement in ‘The Rake’s Progress’, illustrates the use of the fair as social commentary. Almost a century later in 1805, William Wordsworth in *The Prelude*, the same work where the poet had mourned the loss of folk culture in chapbook literature, foregrounds disgust rather than amusement at the “anarchy and din” of Bartholomew Fair. He describes it as “a dream, / Monstrous in colour, motion, shape, sight, sound!” (1979, 1805:7, 685-8). Here all the senses are engaged by the poet to convey the visceral nature of this locus where all is over-powering sound, sight, colour and movement. It is for the poet a nightmarish space, an assault on the senses that reflects Bakhtin’s observation in *Rabelais and his World* that the “festive organization of the crowd must be first of all concrete and sensual” (p. 225). For Wordsworth, however this sensuality tips over into grotesquerie. The fairground becomes a site of fear and disgust rather than of pleasure and fun, elements that I will attest are also present in children’s literature based around the fairground.

Thomas Rowlandson's caricature of the same fair in Pyne and Coombe’s *The Microcosm of London* (1808), tracks Hogarth in presenting an arguably gentler, but nonetheless critical presentation of the carnival space (Fig. 4.18).



Fig. 4.18. Rowlandson, Thomas. ‘Bartholomew Fair’. *The Microcosm of London, or, London in Miniature* (Vol. 1). W. H Pyne. London: R. Ackermann, 1808.

In Rowlandson’s work, the artist places a mother and her children at the centre of the scene. They are surrounded by visions of comic disorder: inebriated consumers, robberies and fights. The seemingly unaccompanied family group thus appears vulnerable and potentially morally questionable. As one commentator terms it: “Rowlandson [...] implicitly gives warning of the dangers of the fair to the family”⁵². Such dangers, which reflect actual violence and disorder surrounding this locus, such as those described by John K. Walton in *Leisure in Britain 1780-1938* (1983), are frequently part of the presentation of the public fair in children’s literature of this early nineteenth-century period (pp. 23-7). Rowlandson’s implicit commentary on the dangers of the fairs posed to children and families resonates strongly with growing opposition to the perceived moral corruption of the large London fairs and the misrule to which many events gave rise. Such opposition had been voiced throughout the

⁵² From commentary in *Romantic Circles* -. < <http://www.rc.umd.edu/gallery/bartholomew-fair>> accessed April. 21 2015

eighteenth century, but by the early 1800s, calls for the complete abolition of such fairs in the capital had reached a climax and had in fact derived some effect in law. *The Examiner* of 1823, for example, reports the Act of Parliament that enabled magistrates to “suppress all fairs within ten miles of the metropolis unless legal cause can be shewn for their origin and continuance” (1823, p. 289). Indeed, the same article reveals that Brook Green Fair referred to specifically in William Walker’s *Old Dame Trot* narrative has “been put down” (p. 289) under these new powers. Walker’s text, then, deals with a form of popular entertainment under keen threat from a desire to control the social activities of the lower orders, and particularly to curb the threat of perceived licentiousness at fairs up and down the country. In this sense, the reference to the fair in Walker’s text could also be read as a comment from the publisher himself regarding the potential corrupting influence of this locale, particularly since, as I have discussed the activities of Dame Trot and her cat at the fair leads to their drunken behaviour. That this locus was particularly concerning in regard to children is evidenced in the juvenile publication *The Child’s Companion or Sunday School Reward*. In 1831 an article in the magazine raised objections to the “scenes of profligacy” at public fairs, concluding that such events “contribute to a very great degree, to that increase of crimes that causes our prisons to overflow” (p. 187). Despite its very different politics Richard Carlisle’s *The Republican* magazine of 1826 is even more vitriolic in its condemnation of Bartholomew’s:

This scene of weakness and depravity has again suffered to disgrace the metropolis and to concentrate its vices to a focus; from which irremediable misery to individuals arises. Old age, women and children, and even pregnant women flock to this foul spectacle to seek food for the mirth that gladdens not, that yields no lasting pleasure, and that destroys that sense of dignified modesty which should be felt by all mankind.” (1826, p. 288)⁵³

The loaded rhetoric foregrounding depravity and vice is linked to ephemeral enjoyment - “that yields no lasting pleasure”, and in its fleeting nature echoes Aristotle in *Nicomachean Ethics* who foregrounds ephemeral amusement as pleasurable yet “silly and utterly childish” (2009, 1176b para. 30), and moreover, as having the potential to do serious harm: “we are injured rather than benefited by them” (2009, 1176b para. 5-10). This kind of fun is expressed by *The Republican* as “food” for depraved enjoyment, thus linking bodily nourishment with bodily pleasure, the opposite of the “dignified modesty” where the head rules the body. In a similar manner to the way in which John Locke talked of the dangers of the impressionable minds of children receiving incorrect sense associations (“Let us then suppose the mind to be, as we say, white paper void of all characters, without any ideas” (1992, p. 33)), so this commentator highlights one of the “evils” of the fair as being that “individuals are taught buffoonery as the best attraction to weak and ignorant minds” (p. 288). This reference to buffoonery is indicative of the physical and nonsensical ‘low’ humour that as I have discussed is frequently seen as part of folk culture. This type of criticism was also leveled at Rabelais by the French writer Voltaire in the eighteenth century. Calling Rabelais “chief amongst buffoons”, Voltaire adds that

⁵³ The *Republican Magazine* was founded by the radical Richard Carlisle. This magazine advocated an anti-establishment agenda and campaigned for the rights of the working man. however in line with McCalman and Perkins’ assertion in *An Oxford Companion to the Romantic Age* that: “While the eighteenth century ‘blackguard tradesmen’ revelled in rough, masculine conviviality, consciously respectable artisans often encouraged their wives to participate in the new self-improving recreational culture and undertake the education of their children” (p. 215), the ‘pleasures’ of the fairground thus receives a similar if not more vociferous condemnation in this periodical as it does in the *Christian Child’s Companion*.

from the author you will get “a good story two pages long, at the price of two volumes of nonsense.” (qtd. in Bakhtin, 1984, p. 141). This sentiment is part of the general negative attitude towards visceral humour that prevailed in the eighteenth century and into the nineteenth. The commentator in *The Republican* links buffoonery to a lack of education and a lack of moral fibre. It is the antithesis of ‘high’ intellectual comic forms that require rational comprehension. The concern of this commentator is that this “mirth that gladdens not” can overflow into “dignified” life and “destroy” it.

As I have established, William Hazlitt in ‘Merry England’ gives quite a different perspective on “buffoonery”, connecting it not to vice and depravity but to the “wayward humours” and “lively impulses” (1825. p. 16) of the “English Common People” (p. 17). In this way the visceral humour and buffoonery that are markers of the fairground are linked positively in Hazlitt’s writing to the idiosyncratic English character, a comment that, as in the discourse surrounding folk humour, attempts to forge a national identity through literature and humour. Unlike the commentator in *The Republican* who desires a “dignified modesty” for all, Hazlitt appreciates the “angular points and grotesque qualities” present in the visceral qualities of carnival merriment as necessary for “comic humour” (p. 21). Hazlitt’s commentary here underscores a current of humour that runs through much of the literary heritage surrounding fairs that finds comedy and social comment amongst the “weakness and depravity” of this locale. However, also central to both sides of perception is the link of base humour with children and the ignorant. For *The Republican* such buffoonery poses a specific danger to minds not yet fully formed, whilst even Hazlitt’s more positive commentary foregrounds Byron’s notion of the “puerile” nature of clowning (p. 22). The connection of the child to low humour and buffoonery is a recurring

theme in the following analysis of texts for children centred on the fairground.

With these differing perceptions of the fair in mind, a children’s chapbook published in the late eighteenth century and reproduced by Lumsden of Glasgow and Houlston of Wellington in the first decades of the nineteenth, draws in both the moral commentary regarding fairs circulating in this era and the aesthetic and literary merit of the ‘nonsense’ entertainments to be found there. *The Humours of the Fair, or, Description of the Early Amusements in Life* is a lengthy chapbook of 31 pages - longer than other chapbooks that I have analysed to date - but which was originally sold for one penny when it was first published sometime in the late 1700s⁵⁴. Its status as a book aimed at a juvenile reader even before the full establishment of the children’s chapbook genre in the 1820s, is evident in the first lines of the text which directly address a child audience: “HALLOO Boys, halloo Boys, Huzza! Huzza! Huzza! Come, Tom, make haste, the Fair is begun” (1793, p. 4)⁵⁵. The narration is jovial with repetition of exclamatory phrases mirroring the locus of the fair as a place of fun and excitement, and this effect continues throughout a narrative that alternates between tantalising descriptions of the attractions of the fair and warnings as to the potential dangers that might befall a juvenile attendee

One of the first examples of this engagement with the positive and negative aspects of the fair comes in a warning for the child reader specifically pertaining to the crowd. In this example danger rather than fun is foregrounded and it supports the

⁵⁴ This edition is undated and published in London “Printed, & Sold by the Booksellers in Town and Country”. Selling price was “One Penny”. The edition in UCLA children’s collection carries an inscription reading “AMELIA • PRIOR + BOOK + 1793 +” giving rise to an estimated publication date of 1780-90. All quotations are from this edition. The long ‘S’ has been standardised all other typographical features and spellings are original.

⁵⁵ This text may well draw upon the 1784 work published by T. Carnan (successor to John Newbery) entitled *The Fairing: or, a golden toy for Children*, where amongst the extended narrative the discussion of the fair commences: “Hallo Boys, hallo Boys. - Huzza!” and utilised similar deictic techniques

subheading of the text as a story “which begins in a manner not at all Wonderful”. The narrator tells the reader:

Make haste, make haste; but don’t get into the crowd; for little boys are often trod upon, and even crushed to death by mixing with the Mob. If you would be safe, by all means avoid a crowd, (p. 5)

This dire warning, which illustrates both the energy and the danger of a massed public, is then emphasised by the specific example of a boy, Dick Wilson, who “has got into the middle of that great mob” and is struggling to escape (5). This presentation of the crowd is echoed in many other children’s publications, such as the chapbook *Youthful Sports, or. the Pleasures of a Country Fair* published by William Walker in the 1820s. Here two boys leave the fairground just as the “rabble of the fair has gathered” and the reader is left in no doubt as to the timeliness of their exit as afterwards “there were six or seven people killed” (p. 14). In *Early Amusements*, however, the specific difficulties of Dick are portrayed with humour and attributed to a lack of wisdom and attention on the part of the boy. Dick is called an “impertinent little monkey” and a “silly chit” who is “always thrusting his nose into difficulties” (p. 5) and “will never take advice” (p. 6), the narrator asks the reader rhetorically: “how shall we get him out?” The accompanying woodcut picturing Dick in the centre of a “mob” foregrounds the immediacy of the reported scene for the child audience with the narrator directing the gaze of the reader towards this image with specific imperatives such as “look yonder” and “see how the rogue scuffles and roars” (p. 5) (Fig. 4.19).



Fig. 4.19. [Anon.] Plate from *The Humours of the Fair, or, Description of the Early Amusements in Life*. London: n.p., c.1780, p. 6.

In this way the child reader ‘experiences’ this scene almost at first hand, with illustration and text working closely together to draw the child into the centre of the action. However, the comedy at work in this narration has the effect of dissipating some of the fear generated by the crowd and this element is reinforced by the figure of Sam Gooseberry who ‘meets’ the narrator just after the incident with Dick and whose first appearance attests to the safety of the boy. Sam states that the crowd “left an opening, through which I made my escape, and have brought off Dick Wilson with me, who by being heartily squeezed, & having twelve of his ten toes trod off, is now cured of his impertinent curiosity” (p. 9). One of the key tenets of carnival humour according to Bakhtin is that it overcomes fear (“the images of folk culture are absolutely fearless” (1984. p. 63)) and as such Sam's joke about Dick’s toes dissipates seriousness in a manner that contrasts strongly with William Walker’s chapbook *Youthful Sports* (c. 1820). In the latter text the author augments, rather than reduces the potential risks of the fair, stating soberly: “Fairs no doubt are pleasant places,

when boys behave themselves well; but if otherwise, they oftentimes end in riot and confusion; therefore I should not advise many to attend” (p.15).

The humour in *The Humours of the Fair* is further extended to Sam Gooseberry’s description of the “mob” which emphasises the body, constructing the crowd both as one corpus and many individuals, an amalgamation of smells and grotesque body parts. The description is worth quoting at length to gain a flavour of this intriguing mode of humour:

Why there is such a mobbing at the other side of the Fair, says Sam, as you never saw in your Life, and one fat fellow is got amongst them that has made me laugh immoderately. - Stand further, good folks, says he, what a mob is here! Who raked all this filthy crowd together? Honest friend take away your elbow. What a beastly crew am I got among? What a smell? Oh, and such squeezing. Why you over-grown sloven, says a footman that stood by, who makes half so much noise and crowding as you? Reduce your own fat paunch to a reasonable compass, sirrah, and there will be room enough for us all. (pp.8-9)

The passage revels in the visceral, carnivalesque interplay between members of the crowd in a mode that evokes the scenes with Falstaff in Shakespeare’s plays. The description revolves around corpulence; the “fat fellow” is a grotesque character in the mode of Bakhtin’s carnival who complains about the “filthy crowd” and the “beastly crew” around him. There are body parts - an “elbow” and a “paunch” that are severed from their respective bodies, again a sign of the comic grotesque, and there is a sensory aspect to the description, the smell, the noise and the “squeezing” which again evokes the “concrete and sensual” nature of the depiction of the crowd in carnival humour - the very same sensuality that Wordsworth finds so disturbing in *The Prelude*. The hyperbolic character however, is not allowed to continue with his discourse and becomes instead the butt of the laughter of the crowd through the insults of the footman who calls him an “over-grown sloven” and who remarks that it

is this character’s own “fat paunch” that is causing the overcrowding in the first place. Sam Gooseberry tells the reader that he “laughs immoderately” at this interchange and the footman’s comments equally presume laughter at the interlocutor. In turn the reader is encouraged to be a part of this carnival world and to share in the comedy of Sam’s reported dialogue between the members of the mob. As Bakhtin remarks, “carnival is not a spectacle seen by the people; they live in it, and everyone participates because its very idea embraces all the people” (1984, p. 31). The child reader through the deictic features of the text is incorporated into the carnival crowd.

However, despite the humour of this text, the work does illustrate, in line with conservative comments surrounding the fairground in this era, the dangers and vices associated with this space. Sam Gooseberry for example points out the wheel of fortune stall to his juvenile audience, remarking:

What do you say? Twenty may play as well as one. Ay, and all may lose, I suppose. Go away, sirrah, what, do you teach children to game! - Gaming is a scandalous practice. The gamester, the liar, the thief, and the pick-pocket, are first cousins, and ought all to be turned out of company, (p. 15)

At this juncture the reader is also shown the aptly named Wat Wilful who “will never take advice” and is always “running in to dangers and difficulties” and who as a result of riding upon the “Up-and-down” is “fallen off, and almost killed” (p. 25). The text for all its jokes, good humour and lively narration which propels the child reader into the centre of the fairground is essentially a treatise on temptation, and ends with straightforward moral lessons for good and naughty girls and boys (pp. 29-31). That Sam Gooseberry is described by the narrator as “puffing and blowing [...] [like] a fool in a fair” and is asked to recite “news from that region of nonsense” (pp. 6-7) allies the text with the vocabulary of Hazlitt as much of the humorous dialogue retains the “lively impulses” of which the critic speaks, but the text simultaneously rejects non-

rational entertainment and echoes a less polemical version of *The Republican’s* article. *The Humours of the Fair* simultaneously mixes general Enlightenment discourse with a carnivalesque humour often to be found in chapbook literature and as such could be said to fit O’Malley’s description of the ‘mixed’ mode, where middle-class pedagogic and moralistic mores are appendaged onto the fairy stories of chapbook literature. O’Malley’s fairy tale model here is replaced by the figure of the fairground, but there is a similar desire to teach a moral lesson. It does however seem to have been a combination that was successful. Lumsden of Glasgow reprinted the text almost word for word in the early nineteenth century, as did Houlston of Wellington. Roscoe and Brimmell in their annotated catalogue of Lumsden’s works remark that the text was “one of the most popular of the Lumsden juveniles” (1981, p. 54). Lumsden’s text doubled in price to two pence in line with many others of the publisher’s chapbooks for children, however it would still have been accessible to a wide cross section of readers ensuring that the pleasures, humour and the dangers of the fair crossed class boundaries.

If *The Humours of the Fair* is complex in its merging of Enlightenment and plebeian narratives, then a rare text printed by John Evans around 1815 that openly describes and extolls the delights of the fair seems at first sight much more straightforward⁵⁶. Short in length and sold for only a halfpenny this text would have been available to a wide range of children. The text is specifically tied to Bartholomew Fair in Smithfields, and from its very title: *A Description of*

⁵⁶ Princeton University Library holds a copy of this text published by Howard and Evans that it dates 1806 and the British Library holds what seems to be the sole copy of another edition published by John Evans alone. John Evans traded as Howard and Evans from approx. 1806-1811 when he then traded as John Evans and Sons from 1813-20. Note: worldcat has the date of the text held at the British Library (and the microfiche copy) as 1811 – a date that does not conform to the information above, however, given that this text seems to be the same as the Princeton copy, there is no reason to suggest the dates of both editions are significantly far apart.

Bartholomew Fair and the Funny Folk There, treats the fair itself as a ‘curiosity’ to be enjoyed by its readers. Like *Early Amusements*, the text employs deictic expressions and accompanying illustrations to point the reader towards a specific scene. The stanzas are written in small quatrains with a regular rhythm and rhyme and enjambment that races the narrative along, piling one delight on top of the other, for example:

Here’s a lady that goes full
Swing on the wire,
Here’s a fellow that
Says he can dine upon fire (p. 5)

Here’s a Tumbler that shews
All manner of postures
And Billingsgate Bess,
Crying who’ll buy my oysters? (p. 6)

Here’s a Comedy King that
Can bluster and swagger
And a Tragedy Queen with
Poison and dagger (p. 7)

The tiny woodcuts that are inserted after every verse illustrate the scene in question. The combination of image and text forms small vignettes giving a lively and positive account of Bartholomew’s Fair with no hint of the didacticism or warnings of the previous text. And yet even within this straightforward presentation, the construction of the child reader in the text effectively neutralises from the beginning any negative opinions regarding the fair. The first stanza of *A Description* constitutes the text itself as a reward for a good child, where the implied child reader is doubled with an ‘actual’ juvenile reader who appears in text and illustrations. The chapbook opens:

Here’s fun from the Fair
You may see what was there.
While you sit by the fire idle
In your arm-chair;

If you read this book through.
Without missing a letter.
Next year for your fairing.
I’ll give you a better (p. 2)

The accompanying woodcut features a seated child reading a book (presumably Evans’ text) looking up at his mother who is also seated. The child reader constructed here is enjoying the fair from the safe confines of a domestic setting. Although the text is cheap to buy, the setting is aspirational; both fire and armchair are the same markers of the middle-class drawing room that I have discussed as an image in relation to the Christmas annuals. The presence of the mother scaffolding the child’s reading, along with the presentation of a shared reading experience, foregrounds an Enlightenment pedagogic agenda where reading is encouraged and rewarded. The text explicitly constructs the idea of a reward-book for a good child and incentivises the child to read well with the promise of a “better” gift next year. The fact that this child is “idle” further marks out the boy as middle rather than working class, increased leisure time being a marker of the emerging middle classes. Although the text positively presents the wonders and humours of the fairground with its “tumblers” and “comedy kings” and “Mr Punch, with/a hunch on his back” (p. 3), the text as well as the implied juvenile reader and the fictional child constructed within the text are clearly separated from the physical fairground. Instead of attending the actual event both children experience a remediated, ‘safe’ version of Bartholomew Fair in the comfort of their own home guided by their caregiver and removed from the unsuitable humour outlined in *The Republican*.

Indeed, the figure of the adult guide within the fairground is important within many children’s chapbooks on this subject. Sam Gooseberry and the unnamed narrator in *The Humours of the Fair* are part of the humour of the carnival (even

Sam’s name has comic connotations), yet they still act as a moral guide to the child reader of the text. Similarly, even when chapbook texts show children actually attending the fairground, as in Lumsden’s work *Holiday Entertainment; or, The Good Child’s Fairing*, the presence of an adult figure directs the children’s attention to both humour and learning. This text was sold for two pence, thus although not the cheapest of Lumsden’s books, was aimed at a less affluent market. Despite this accessibility, the siblings of the story, like the boy in Evans’ text, are evidently from a wealthy family and are promised a visit to the fair as a holiday treat. The trip is postponed twice due to the weather, but when they get there with Mrs Goodwill the housekeeper as a guide, they:

[...] saw toy-shops and show-booths, and heard music and everything was pleasant and agreeable, with a vast number of folks assembled in purpose to be merry. And Mrs Goodwill took them to see the shows, where punch and his puppets dance, as well as buying them several fine toys, and pointing out to them the merry tricks of Mr Andrew who never fail to entertain all those that gaze on him. (pp. 25-6)

In this representation there is no feeling that the humour and the sights that the children encounter are any less then genial and positive. The references to the puppet show and to “Mr Andrew”, two attractions that rely on physical and grotesque humour are “merry” and “entertaining”. Even the crowd that in *The Humours of the Fair* had a dangerous edge is here, “a vast number of folks assembled in purpose to be merry”. The vocabulary of amiable humour prevails as does what Bakhtin terms the “mere holiday mood” (1984, p. 33) into which he claims the carnival is transformed during the eighteenth century. Certainly there is no grotesquerie in these descriptions and no trace of the “mirth that gladdens not” which according to *The Republican* “destroys [all] sense of dignified modesty”. Instead, Mrs Goodwill ensures that the children are steered towards an acceptable mode of humour. This is particularly

emphasised in the contrast between the spectacle of the horse/dog, “each of whom would put together the letters so as to spell a great many words” (p. 27) and that of the ape “who did many extraordinary things; but there were scarcely any of them but what were mischievous” (p. 27). The ape’s tricks are amusing to the children, but the housekeeper points out how this animal “differs from the horse and dog [...] For all they did had the appearance of improvement; whilst all [that] this creature attempt[s] is unlucky, and he himself good for nothing” (pp. 27-8). The visit to the fair ends with the narrator describing the pedagogic benefit of the fairground attractions to the children:

They saw a great number of fine sights besides; and there were scarcely one of them, but Mr Welldon’s housekeeper drew some moral from it. which was all for the benefit of her company; for children’s hours can never be more profitably employed, than when they are at the same time entertained and instructed, (p. 28)

This chapbook thus draws in the humorous and entertaining aspects of the fair as a ‘lure’ to a more edifying learning experience for the children in the text and concurrently for its child readers. As the preface to this story states: “That all little folks should mind their learning, is a truth which nobody will dispute; but that they should have play, amusement, and holidays, at proper times, to be sure, is as necessary”. Like Evans’ text, which is constructed as an enticement to read, Lumsden’s work follows the Lockean concept of being “cozen’d into [...] knowledge [...] without perceiving it to be anything but a sport” (1889, p. 67). The depiction of the humours of the fair masks a pedagogic function. Lumsden’s low-priced text betrays the same moral message as do some of the prefaces of the Christmas annuals which attend to a much more affluent readership. The writer here supports Aristotle’s assertion in *The Nicomachean Ethics* that although leisure is necessary to achieve a balanced life: “amusement is a sort of relaxation, and we need relaxation because we

cannot work continuously” (2009, p. 1176b para. 30-5), only true leisure, which always requires an aspect of intellectual and contemplative work, can truly benefit man (2009, p. 1177a para. 30). Here extracted from the physically carnivalesque humour of the attractions of the fairground is an amusement that can nourish the child rather than merely providing the ‘fleeting’ pleasures that *The Republican* magazine so vehemently opposes. Such a presentation supports O’Malley’s assertion that children’s literature was influenced by middle-class enlightenment ideology, however also felt here is the influence of a Romantic philosophy of the child where the humour of the fairground is stripped of its folkloric carnivalistic aspects and instead retains only a semblance of a “holiday mood”.

The influence of Romanticism on this locale is even more keenly felt in *The Humours of the Fair, A Tale for the Nursery*. This work is an anonymous and undated text for children held in the Hockcliffe Collection costing 6d plain and 1s coloured. The introductory essay on the website calls it on the surface an “uncritical representation of the fair, a celebration of the delights to be found there” (par. 2). The fair is indeed presented in a positive manner within this text with no moralistic comment concerning the negative aspects of the carnival space that I have discussed in other texts. When reading this work alongside others with the same trope a further detachment of the trope of the fairground from its roots in folk culture is evident. If Lumsden and Evans’ texts utilise the amusements of the fairground as an enticement to learn, here, the author locates the carnival within a fantastic environment which has much in common with the style of Roscoe’s *The Butterfly’s Ball*⁵⁷. Written in verse,

⁵⁷ This seems to be a rare and mysterious text. I can only find two other copies in the Morgan Library and Museum, and in UCLA Library. Like the Hockcliffe text, neither of these copies are dated or have a publisher. The former estimates a date of 1810-1819 “suggested by the fashions in the illustrations”, the latter gives a date of 1808 but no further rationale. These dates would however make the work broadly concurrent with *The Butterfly’s Ball*.

the repetition of references to “pleasure” and “fun” from the very first stanzas underlines the positive presentation of the carnival. As in the previous texts, the juvenile reader is directly addressed and placed literally in the very “middle” of the action:

Come young ones, prepare.
 Away to the fair.
 Of pleasure to be in the middle;
 To taste of the cake.
 See the bull at the stake.
 Dancing dogs, and the cat and the fiddle

Then down again coming.
 Such fifing and drumming.
 You’ll find to here and go there;
 The sight will be such
 Twill pleasure you much.
 To see the fine fun at the Fair. (pp. 1-2)

As in the description of the crowd in *Early Amusements*, this scene is evoked by imagery that utilises all the senses: the taste of the cake, the sound of the music and the sight of the dancing dogs and other attractions. All combine to evoke the visceral qualities of the amusements that centre on sensory rather than cerebral experience. The grotesquely ambivalent quality of *Early Amusements* is absent in *The Humours of the Fair*. Here instead the text portrays a positive experience of carnival fun that is reinforced by pleasant sensory experiences like the taste of the cake. Even the choice of the feminine rhyme on “coming” and “drumming” softens the auditory image. This is a much more agreeable noise than the “anarchy and din” of *The Prelude*. This “fine fun” evokes the “innocence and a native wildness” of the “English common people” in Hazlitt’s ‘Merry England’ (1825. p. 23), but without the grotesque touches of which the writer speaks in the same essay. The accompanying illustrations echo the lively verse with the entertainments foregrounded (Fig. 4.20).

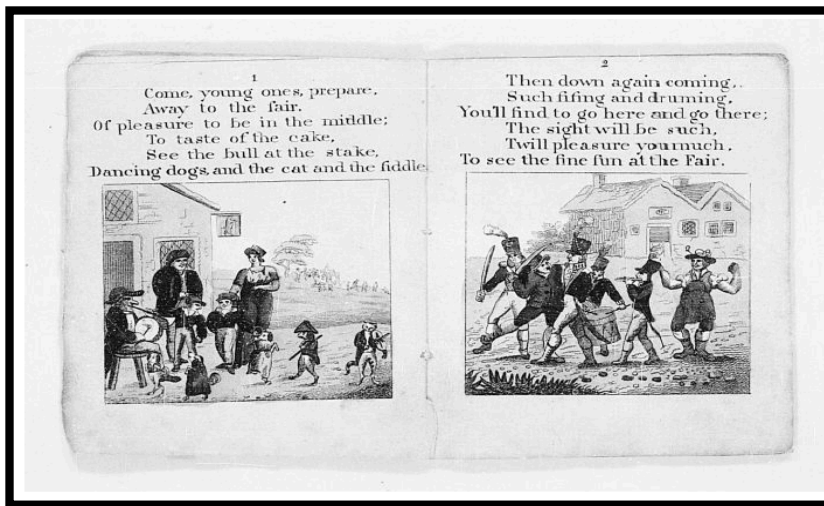


Fig. 4.20. [Anon.] Plate from *The Humours of the Fair, A Tale for the Nursery*. London: n.p. n.d. [c.1815], pp. 1&2

In these drawings, the crowds of the fair with all its associated dangers are absent and the rural backdrop and seemingly idealised drawings with children playing happily on the merry-go-round or observing the wild beasts and exotic animals prevalent at the fair (Fig. 4.21) presents a romanticised view of popular culture. Such an idealized view chimes with an on-going debate surrounding the appropriation of popular culture by the social elite that was sparked by Thomas Ritson’s opposition to Thomas Percy’s *Reliques of English Poetry* (1765) in the late 1700s. Percy's introduction to his text had idealised the figure of the medieval minstrel and (arguably) appropriated the lower order culture that they represented for consumption by the higher classes. Joseph Ritson in his *Select Collection of English Song* (1783) had openly ridiculed Percy’s presentation of court dynamics and in doing so had sparked a hostile debate shown through letters in journals and periodicals regarding social class and the presentation and appropriation of popular culture. This debate was still current in the early 19th century⁵⁸. *The Humours of the Fair* thus illustrates the deep engagement of

⁵⁸ See Butler, 1999 for a detailed analysis of this debate (pp. 332-4)

children’s literature with contemporary debate and the ability of such texts to remediate such current topics into juvenile discourse. Ritson particularly opposed those (like Percy) who, to quote Butler “edited and altered oral culture for consumption by the polite classes” (1999, p. 332) and the discourse of the fairground in this text also selectively reappropriates the carnival humour of the fairground into the discourse of the amiable humourist, and as in the Christmas annuals, produces literature for a child reader that locates the juvenile audience in a pleasantly humorous and innocent world, transported away from the mundane life - the “dull ground”, into a realm of magic and fun “without any dread” (p. 3) (Fig. 4.21).

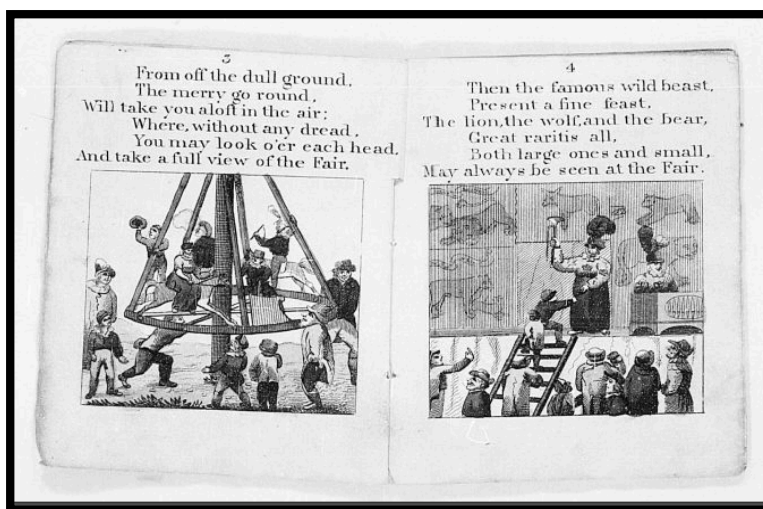


Fig. 4.21. [Anon.] Plate from *The Humours of the Fair, A Tale for the Nursery*. London: n.p. n.d. [c.1815], pp. 3&4.

The vocabulary used in the opening and closing sections of this work echoes the similarly magical levity of Roscoe’s *The Butterfly’s Ball*. Compare “Come young ones, prepare, / Away to the fair.” (*The Humours of the Fair*) with “Come take up your hats and away let us haste” (*The Butterfly’s Ball*). In this way the author creates in the locus of the fairground what Donelle Ruwe calls in reference to Roscoe’s poem,

“a private special place without time and without movement”, a place that epitomises “the essentializing Romantic discourse of childhood” (2014, p.180).

And yet other texts written at broadly the same time as this work, present the theme of the fair and the associated humour of this environment in a way which neither purely romanticises nor utilises the space to teach a wider moral message. Instead my next example, William Darton’s *Curious Account of the Origin of Fairlop Fair with an Entertaining Description of the Motley Multitude who Assemble on that Occasion* (1811) revels in the comic potential of the interaction of different social classes within the fairground narrative and thus places the text within a mode of visual humour that was particularly pertinent to the early nineteenth century.

The lengthy title to Darton’s work is pertinent in several ways. Firstly, the text constructs the fair itself as of interest in an antiquarian sense. The narrative, an entertaining poem, is concerned about “origins”, about the tradition that lies behind the staging of Fairlop Fair in Hainault, Essex every summer. The fascination with antiquarianism that I have discussed in relation to chapbooks also extended to the popular culture of fairs and exhibitions with many narratives lamenting the decline of fairs from genuine entertainment into the debauched events as referenced in *The Republican*. However, the origins of Fairlop Fair did not lie in the saturnalian past of the medieval ages, instead it had comparatively recent, Regency roots. Fairlop Fair was not originally ‘of the people’ but was initiated by the gentleman Thomas Day who inherited some land in the Hainault vicinity in the early 1700s. After collecting rents on the same day in July every year he decided to mark the occasion by holding a feast underneath the vast Fairlop Oak. This tradition continued every year and the fair grew larger until it came under regulation in the later 1700s. Despite this, the fair continued until the mid 1850s and a modest corpus of literature surrounding this fair

is evidenced in catalogue entries⁵⁹. Darton’s text aimed at a middle-class child audience (and their parents) through the one-shilling retail price, foregrounds Daniel Day and emphasises the status of the fair as a continuation of a tradition with respectable roots in the gentrified class:

Some years ago, a party met
Beneath this noble tree:
They cheerfully in mirth were set
When all then did agree
That yearly they would constant meet;
And, underneath this oak.
They’d always have an annual treat.
And crack a merry joke. (7)

Here the vocabulary of ‘amiable’ humour evidenced in the papillonnades and in the *Humours of the Fair* is also present: the group is “*cheerfully* [set] in mirth”; they share “*merry jokes*” (my emphasis). Such a lexicon expunges the accounts of degradation and debauchery regarding the fair referenced by the many non-fiction sources already discussed. Specific accounts of a rise in lawlessness surrounding Fairlop Fair mirror similar accounts at other large fairs such as Bartholomew’s, however the accompanying illustration, like the text, foregrounds instead the geniality, civility and the upper-class background of the founders (Fig. 4.22). In this way Fairlop Fair and the fairgoers themselves are interpolated into the gentrification of the humour suggested by the vocabulary.

⁵⁹ See titles such as *History. Origin and Rise of Fairlop Fair (1813)* and *The Origin of Fairlop Fair. Held Annually Round the Great Oak, on Hainault Forest in Essex (1796)*



Fig. 4.22. [Anon.] Plate from *Curious Account of the Origin of Fairlop Fair with an Entertaining Description of the Motley Multitude who Assemble on that Occasion*. London: W. Darton, 1811, p. 7.

Day is pictured seated at a generous picnic spread, enjoying the leisure and the natural surroundings under the Fairlop oak. Music accompanies their feast and the smoking and all-male group is reminiscent of an open-air version of a London gentleman’s club and also echoes the animal picnic scenes in some of the conservative papillonnade texts. Even the title with its emphasis on ‘origins’ is consistent with the similar re-creation of scholarly history that John Harris uses to such comic effect in his 1818 *Dame Trot*. In contemporary paintings of Fairlop Fair, a similar genteel atmosphere is evidenced. For example, Charles Leslie’s painting of Fairlop Fair from 1841 (Fig. 4.23), highlights a child in the foreground of the work:



Fig. 4.23. Leslie, Charles ‘Fairlop Fair’, 1841

In contrast to Rowlandson’s image of Bartholomew’s discussed earlier, this child is away from the family group enjoying the open space. The family appear unconcerned about any potential dangers that might befall the child. Such a condition is also envisaged in Darton’s text:

For, fearing neither accident.
Or ought that may betide;
Pleasure’s alone their sole intent.
And mirth their only guide, (p. 4)

Fear and danger are expunged from the narrative, but not in the all-consuming way that Bakhtin suggests happens with carnival laughter where an immersion on the carnivalesque mitigates fear through humour. Here the crowd are present to experience an Aristotelian type of pleasure in which they can relax at the same time as their leisure hours are filled. Whilst there may not be much reference to learning here, the pleasure and fun become the overriding reason for attending the fair: “So much pleasure’s there” the narrator reports, “[t]hat, when the month of June is flown, /All hie to Fairlop Fair” (p. 10). Even in a satirical print by Thomas Tegg printed and sold in 1815 (Fig. 4.24) the image is of carnival fun and bears little of the weight of the human condition envisaged in Rowlandson’s etching of Bartholomew Fair above.



Fig. 4.24 Tegg, Thomas. ‘Fairlop Fair’. London: Thomas Tegg, 1815.

Here Harlequin is on stage watched by a small group (rather than a massed crowd). The faces of the spectators are happy, numerous other amusements are visible in the rural background, whilst to the right a portly gentleman trips over a dog - the only real ‘danger’ apparent in this visual narrative⁶⁰.

However, in Darton’s text, unlike in *Early Amusements* or *A Description of Bartholomew Fair* by Evans, there is very little reference to the actual attractions of the fair itself. Darton’s narrative is much more about observing the people at the fair - as the subtitle: *An Entertaining Description of the Motley Multitude who Assemble on that Occasion* might suggest. The narrator appears to ridicule the lower middle classes of the social strata, painting small vignettes of, for example the “would-be gentry fine” who appear “from some very strange abodes” dressed in “gaudy trappings”. Or the girl who “all the year, / In some bye lane has been” and who goes to Fairlop in order that “She’ll there her fortune try, / In hopes a sweet-heart soon to meet, / Who’ll wed her, by-and-by.” (p. 16). The text then, employs a mode of social satire that Rowlandson and other satirists regularly figured, and at the same time imbricates children’s literature into these same comic orders.

This satirisation of the working class and those with pretensions seemingly above their station is also markedly evident in Darton’s depiction of the journey to Fairlop Fair. The comic potential for events and accidents to occur within roads congested with people drawn from all sectors of society seems often to be of larger interest than the same crowds mingling at the fair itself. The crowd and the journey become the chief attractions. Of principal concern in the description is the presence of people travelling by stagecoach in the same road as pedestrians. For example, in a

⁶⁰ Thomas Tegg published many satirical prints during the early nineteenth century from his print shop in Cheapside. Despite the amiable levity of ‘Fairlop Fair’ many of his other prints were much more biting

Kentish chapbook text printed around 1800 and entitled *Dick and Sal at Canterbury Fair*, the two principal characters, a young milk maid and a farmer’s son walk to the fair and are almost run over by a coach. Dick remarks in Kentish dialect:

An when we got into de street.
A coach dat come from Dover,
Did gran nigh tread us under feet.
An Sal was 'most run over (p. 49)

In a narrative that is constructed like an oral retelling where event and event tumble together on top of one another, this section is comic rather than worrying and is presented as part of the overall exciting experience of going to the fair. The incidents are not presented as warnings, but rather comic incidents. In Darton’s text for more wealthy children, the presence of the stagecoach is also an occasion for a real and metaphoric collision between high and low culture. The narrator reports that the roads are full “[w]ith chaises, gigs, line tandems too, / With bucks of blood and fire; / Who dashing near the vulgar go, / And splash with dirt and mire” (p. 10). As Heller notes, a coach ensured some element of protection for its inhabitants: “Set above the pedestrians, a passenger in a coach was thus out of the fray, safe from danger and secure in his or her superior physical position” (2010, p. 143). However, in Darton’s text the perpetrators of injury to others are also eventually themselves “laid low”. The proceeding lines contain a warning to the young “buck” in the coach to beware of his actions:

‘But John, be careful, mind your way,
‘Perhaps some charioteer
‘May chance your splashing back to pay,
‘And bring you earth too near,
‘Then sprawling on the dirty road,
‘And hallooing in your need,
‘Your tandem, lighten’d of its load,
‘Is tearing on with speed.’

The passenger, with laughter, marks
The poor crest-fallen beau;
And tittering girls, and saucy sparks.
Rejoice he’s laid so low (p. 12)

The idea of the uncaring upper class “beau” being “laid so low” and ending up as the equivalent of the mud-splatted plebeian in the road is portrayed as a source of comedy for the reader and for the other characters in this tableau alike. The reader is encouraged to join in the laughter of the other characters in celebrating John’s ‘just-desserts’. This humour merges the Hobbesian superior mode with a good-natured laughter that revels in the carnival overturning of fortune - both literal and metaphorical - on the way to the carnival itself. Such a presentation also speaks to the levelling and potentially democratic nature of humour where, as Jean Paul Richter suggests, the great have the potential to be made small through comedy. The accompanying illustration (Fig. 4.25) foregrounds the comedy of the situation - the other characters point and laugh - the hat held aloft by the man in the background even points to a resounding cheer for John’s seemingly deserved punishment.



Fig. 4.25. [Anon.] Plate from *A Curious Account of the Origin of Fairlop Fair with an Entertaining Description of the Motley Multitude who Assemble on that Occasion*. London: W. Darton, 1811, p. 12.

Such humour centred on small inconveniences was a popular medium for visual comedy in this period. As Maidment notes, humour in comic publications of this period often revolved around:

urban anxiety, especially the press of numbers and inter-class proximity everywhere evident on the pavements of the metropolis [into a] series of small scale ‘nuisances’ and ‘miseries’, in which irritation was posited as a mechanism for sublimating fear and threat (2013, p. 42).

The huge throngs of crowds at the fair are an exaggerated extension of the London city streets. And yet such laughter is contrary to much of the intersection of comedy and politeness in regard to children that I have evidenced elsewhere in my discussion. Laughing at others, however unfortunate or indeed deserving of punishment was the start, according to many Evangelicals in particular, of a slippery slope towards a lack of empathy. And yet, Darton’s recount of the journey to the fair seems to revel in these class conflicts, exploiting the potential for misfortune in the “inter-class proximity” that Maidment describes and inscribing this children’s text and its readers into a mode of humour that prevailed in the adult sphere. In this way, Bolton and Grusin’s “genealogy of affiliations” extends across both audience and social class.

Such a narrative is also present in the final text of my discussion; a children’s chapbook by J. L. Marks entitled *The History of Gaffer Gurton’s Visit to the Fair*. Although undated, this text is probably around twenty-five years later than Darton’s *Fairlop Fair*, however the comedy of the text revolves, like Darton’s book, in part around the observation of characters that go to the fair rather than the fair itself. John Lewis Marks was himself a caricaturist and one of many in the early nineteenth century that used visual humour to portray the common anxieties and inconveniences of everyday life in metropolitan London. As Maidment observes, Marks was also an artist deeply involved with depicting the theme of the ‘March of Intellect’. This

subject describes a group of satiric texts both visual and written, originating in the Regency and early Victorian period that satirised the ability of lower class workers to ‘better’ themselves through education. Such work describes, as Maidment states; “the potentially heroic idea of ‘progress’ being subverted by a characteristically ironic awareness of the actual absurdities, distortions and grotesqueries which accompanied social advances.” (2001, p. 58). Marks’ treatment of the main characters in *Gaffer Gurton* reflects a similar critical position. Marks’ two main characters are husband and wife of thirty years, Gaffer Gurton and Dame Gurton who, because they have only seen “a small share of pleasure” in their life together, decide to visit the fair. They both dress up in fine clothes that make them appear comical rather than genteel:

In an old fashioned bonnet
A great bow stuck on it.
And gaffer in his cocked hat and jazey.
They went off at a pace
That would ne’er win a race,
Those queer figures I’m sure would amaze ye. (p. 2)⁶¹

In a similar manner to Marks’ print ‘The March of the Interlect (sic), or a Dust-man and his family’ (n.d), the outfits here are “‘overtrimmed and exaggerated versions of contemporary fashions” (2001, p. 69) and the description of the clothes of Gaffer and his wife are similarly comically hyperbolic. Indeed, the couple’s appearance is so overblown that it causes considerable amusement from boys in the street, prompting Dame Gaffer to state:

⁶¹ This chapbook. contains no pagination I have labelled the text pages sequentially from the start of the verse narrative. I have also preserved the original erratic spelling (“joging” but “flogging” for example, “realy” without double ‘l’ and so on) unless specifically stated otherwise.

‘Tis to bad said the Dame
And realy a shame.
That folks on their way can't be joling.
But each saucy boy
Must thus them annoy.
They realy deserve a good Flogging (p. 3)

In the plate that accompanies the verse above, children can clearly be seen laughing and pointing at the couple with dogs barking and adding to the confusion as they hurry through (Fig. 4.26).



Fig. 4.26. [Anon.] Plate from *The History of Gammar Gurton’s Visit to the Fair*. London: J.L. Marks, c. 1837, facing p. 3

Gaffer Gurton and his wife are grotesquely drawn – Dame Gurton in particular with long nose and chin, features that are common to frequent renderings of female ‘dames’ (such as Dame Trot) in chapbook literature.

On reaching the fair the couple see some of the sights that are also described by Evans in his very different chapbook: “Lions, Tiger, Jackalls, /With fried sausage stalls, /And the great show of Johnson and Lee” (p. 3), but like Darton the emphasis is

very much upon the people. The couple become subject to the crowd on the return journey (Marks terms it a “mob”): a whack on both their heads renders them unable to see as their large hats cover their eyes. Eventually they fall (or are pushed) onto a “barrel of ale”. The reader is told:

They heard it give way
And shocking to say.
Right up to their middles they fell (p. 4)

The accompanying illustration shows the couple at the mercy of the crowd, tormented, either accidentally or perhaps purposefully by the “mob” (Fig. 4.27).

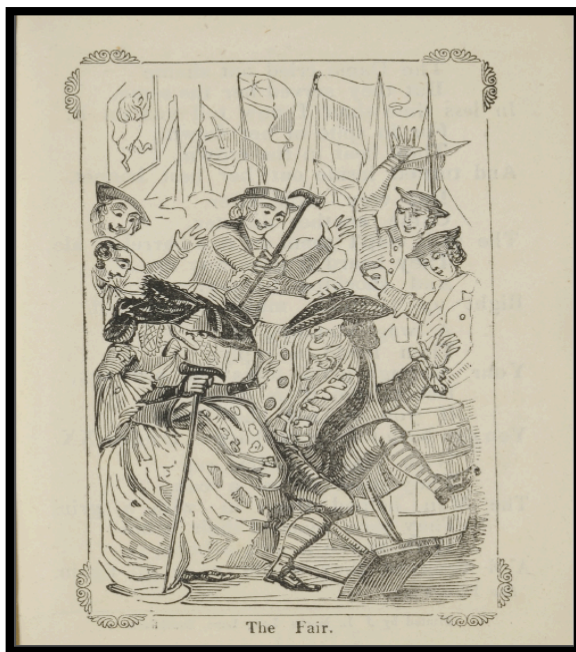


Fig. 4.27. [Anon.] Plate from *The History of Gammar Gurton’s Visit to the Fair*. London: J.L. Marks, c. 1837, facing p. 4.

Here the dangers of the crowd as envisaged as a warning for children in many other juvenile chapbooks becomes remediated into the stuff of comedy. Because of Marks’ focus on the social pretensions of Gaffer Gurton and his wife, the overriding emotion

is laughter rather than sympathy. The (rather strained) Aristotelian defence of some modes of superior humour that Beattie expounds in ‘An Essay on Laughter and Ludicrous Composition’ might apply here: where there is “deformity and distortion without distress” laughter might ensue (1776, p. 354). In other words, despite all the advice to the contrary, someone who is ridiculous in appearance is potentially a fair target of laughter. There is also here an element of Bergson’s theory of the socially corrective nature of laughter where vanity is seen to be the one vice which has the most potential for laughter and which ensures that society will regulate itself against being vain: “the specific remedy for vanity is laughter [...] the one failing that is essentially laughable is vanity” (1914, p. 174). The characters of Gammar Gurton and his wife are caricatures and in this respect this mode of laughter with a corrective quality allies itself with Marks work for adult in satirical print culture. In its foregrounding of physical humour, the text also doubles the slapstick, violence and farce in fairground attractions such as Punch and Judy or the Merry Andrew in the discourse surrounding Gammar Gurton and his wife. The fairgoers, who have presumably come to the fair to enjoy such humour, also find themselves amongst such laughter in its environs. For a child reader, Marks paints a curious mix of superior humour and the massed laughter of the crowd. Only the central figures are seen to be unappreciative of the tricks played on them: “They soon reached their home / With scarce a whole bone / And resolved they would ne’er go again” (p. 4), for the rest of the community the adventures of the couple are a source of much amusement. As Dickie states “Ridiculing and inflicting pain were everyday amusements” in the eighteenth century (2011, p. 169), and here in the early nineteenth, Marks’ text gives tacit approval to similar comic forces. However, the Gammar Gurton narrative can also be read as an (albeit comic) indictment of the locus of the fairground, and can

serve as a warning to the young reader that this should be a location to avoid. Mark's text read in conjunction with other works for children based on the trope of the fairground is an ambiguous text.

The locus of the fair, then with all its plebeian associations is utilised frequently in cheap chapbook texts for children alongside more expensive juvenile books. Such usage points to a mix of ideologies containing warnings, education, humour, tradition and art, mixing high and low culture not just in the physical crowds of the fair but also in the texts themselves. The prevalence of satirical humour in these final texts also signals a reciprocal exchange or remediation between comedy aimed at adults and that destined for a juvenile audience. The children's chapbook is a fascinating form that as both a product and a creator of the culture around it, proves that popular culture and cheap literature in this era were not simply vestiges of the past, but instead a vibrant part of early nineteenth century.

Popular culture in this era was not of course simply limited to the distractions of the fairground or to be found in the eponymous heroes and heroines of folk culture. Rather, the widespread and popular entertainments in the streets of towns and villages, alongside the theatres in London and beyond, provided a focus for a wide variety of humorous performances and amusements. My final chapter thus interrogates laughter within the dramatic mode and analyses how this humour is used and interpreted on stage as well as how it is remediated into other textual and visual forms. As a mode that was accessible to a variety of social classes, this discussion cements the movement of comedy across the economic divide that I have noted in children's chapbook, thus reinforcing the centrality of humour in children's literature of this period.

Playing with humour: Drama and the Child

In my previous chapter I discussed the relationship between the oral and textual comedy of folk culture and forms of printed media - inexpensive children's chapbooks and works aimed at a more affluent juvenile audience. I interrogated the complex dynamic between Romantic and Enlightenment concepts of the child, and the role that humour plays within this discourse. In the final section the visual and textual presentation of the fairground embodied a carnivalesque mode of humour rooted in spectacle. In my final chapter this concept of spectacle is key to my discussion as I interrogate humour arising from the literature of performance: plays, pantomimes, Juvenile Dramas and street entertainments that cross public and private spheres and which were accessible to a broad range of children from across the social spectrum.

On the streets of London and in other cities, through songs, puppet theatres and penny gaffs, children and adults from all social classes were amused and entertained. As Peter Bailey terms it in *Leisure and Class in Victorian England* (1987), "street life [...] was much enlivened by the diversion and entertainment of its professional habitués: Punch and Judy men, buskers, ballad hawkers (the 'flying stationers'), street preachers, stump orators [...]" (p. 15). Such performances were also supplemented away from the streets, by drama taking place in a multitude of city theatres and private establishments that embraced the comic form through burlesques, extravaganzas and pantomimes. What all this humour has in common is a visual and interactive aspect where laughter is derived from seeing rather than reading the comic and where the social dimension of laughter in a shared experience is also critical to both performance and interpretation.

This chapter interrogates street entertainments such as the Punch and Judy show and discusses how the violent comedy of Punch textualised in John Payne Collier's *The Tragical Comedy, or Comical Tragedy of Punch and Judy* (1828) influenced texts for children featuring this character. My discussion also analyses the link between Punch and the figure of the clown in pantomimes of this era such as *Harlequin Gulliver* (1817), *Harlequin and Red Dwarf* (1813) and *Harlequin and Swans* (1813). Using reviews, articles, play texts and the mode of the toy theatre that remediated many of these pantomimes into visual/textual forms, I illustrate how the arguably 'irrational' comedy of these shows, places the child at the centre of a complex narrative regarding humour and the literature of performance. John Poole's comic farce *Paul Pry* which was performed at the Haymarket Theatre in 1825 introduces a discussion of the child's place in the wider comic and economic culture of the era, whilst in my final section interrogating Anna Jameson's play for children *Much Coin, Much Care* (1829) allows me to establish the link between humour, performance and social and class context. Throughout my discussion I emphasise the dialogic nature of drama, which in the early nineteenth century vacillated backwards and forwards from performance to print (both visual and written) to performance again. I also show how such widespread refashioning derives a corresponding movement through societal hierarchies of readership, thus allowing dramatic literature to touch children of all social classes.

In interrogating this aspect, Mikhail Bakhtin's scholarship on the 'dialogic imagination' is once again key. I have already discussed these theories in regard to the papillonnades and the refashioning of meaning according to reader reception, literary context and other factors. However, in the case of drama, dialogism receives a new impetus from the very provisional nature of the performance itself and the real rather

than implied presence of an audience whose role, as Susannne Greenhalgh suggests, must be to “interpret and take an attitude to what they see and hear, and whose response actively and directly shapes the nature and meaning of the experience” (2009, p. 267). Such an aspect can be said to echo Bakhtin’s assertion in ‘Speech Genres’ that “a live utterance, is inherently responsive [...] the listener becomes the speaker” (1981, p. 93). This ‘reception’ dimension in the literature of performance is critical to my interrogation of the relationship between drama and the child where the latter has a powerful role to play in deriving and refashioning meaning from often adult-centric sources. This is particularly relevant to my discussion of the toy theatre. Alongside Bakhtin’s dialogism. Bolter and Grusin’s ‘remediation’ is relevant to my discussion of the reuse of the stage character of Paul Pry in children’s literature. In analysing the “symbolic dependence” of literary text to stage performance the economic dimension that Bolter and Grusin assert within their work is wholly apparent (2000, p. 56). Central to Bakhtin and Bolter and Grusin’s work is the notion that the audience/addressee is not the passive recipient of meaning, but instead is integral to meaning making and remediation. In Chapter 3 I have discussed the juvenile reader’s potential for creative and playful textual interaction within the pages of the Christmas annuals. To support the progression of this dynamic through the dramatic mode, my analysis also draws upon Stanley Fish’s concept of ‘interpretive communities’ as adapted for use in the area of performance studies in works such as Susan Bennett’s *Theatre Audiences* (1997) and Helen Freshwater’s *Theatre and Audience* (2009). Just as reader-response theorists might outline the role of the reader in synthesizing meaning from a text based upon their own experience and knowledge, so an audience might also bring different interpretations to bear upon a performance. If this audience also shares ties of family and/or friendship, as was often the case in the staging of private theatricals, then these factors can also influence, on a

microcosmic level, the way that humour operates in performance. This aspect of audience power is especially pertinent in my discussion of private performance in the final section of this chapter, when the distinction between actor and audience becomes blurred, and where the interaction between the two parties is vital to an appreciation of the role of performance in both expounding and changing the humorous emphasis based on the context of the performance.

The extra-textual context of a dramatic performance also has particular ramifications for types of humour such as slapstick and farce that often form part of drama. Audiences often view performance with some kind of prior knowledge of the ‘type’ of play they are seeing. They are also influenced by reviews, advertisements and oral discourses surrounding the dramatic mode, and as such they are frequently predisposed, as the French critic Anne Ubersfeld suggests, to take pleasure in all aspects of the theatrical experience (1982, p. 130). Thus the audience of a Punch and Judy show or a pantomime, for example, may view such productions with a prior proclivity towards a comic rather than a serious interaction, foregrounding laughter as the ascendant emotion and allowing for enjoyment of scenes which in other frames of references might not be amusing. Louise Peacock elaborates on this point in ‘No Pain, No Gain’:

[...] in terms of comic performance, recognition relies on the firm establishment of a comic frame. Once the audience realises that what it is watching is intended to be funny there is a greater chance that laughter will follow [...] A key element in the recognition of a comic performance frame occurs in the identification of both genre and performer. All of this requires a certain amount of cultural knowledge in providing a context. (2010, p. 96)

My analysis of the often violent, slapstick humour of Punch and Judy centres around this concept of a humorous scaffold that foregrounds the ‘unreal’ nature of the performance. Additionally, the way in which the communal presence of an audience

is often vital to the transmission of laughter (or tears) is another important aspect of the performance of comic texts. In her work on the theatre, Anne Ubersfeld asserts, “theatrical pleasure is not a solitary pleasure, but it is reflected and reverberates through others; it spreads like a train of gunpowder or suddenly congeals [...] One does not go alone to the theatre - one is less happy when alone” (1982, p. 128). The image of an audience united in laughter also sits neatly with the concept of the sociable and positive aspects of ‘amiable’ humour that form such an important undercurrent in discussion of laughter in this era. In many of the reviews of pantomime that I interrogate in this chapter, for example, the comic dramatic mode is often placed within the same discourse of sociable, convivial humour that is also emphasised in the construction of Christmas within the annuals. Here the child and childhood is key to uniting the family in shared conviviality. And yet the ascendancy of visual and visceral modes of humour in dramatic performance, and the appearance of what Jonah Barish (1981) terms the “anti-theatrical prejudice” surrounding drama and the child in particular, is frequently at odds with such an appealing role for humour. This discrepancy highlights intriguing areas of interrogation relating to the role of drama within wider philosophical and social considerations of humour and which I will explore some of these areas in the following pages.

Critical Heritage

Analysing texts written and performed (and in the case of street entertainments sometimes not written at all) at a remove of more than two hundred years is a difficult task; one which can never achieve, realistically, a complete reconstruction of contemporary performance or response. Indeed, the ephemeral qualities of performance is often why drama “generate[s] an attitude of caution” amongst scholars

(Greenhalgh p. 267), thus contributing to a general lack of critical focus on the dramatic mode, particularly in regard to children's literature. In 2012, Marah Gubar decried a historical lack of critical focus on drama and the child stating, "[s]cholarly histories, handbooks and companions to children's literature spend almost no time discussing drama" (p. v). Although her own work and that of Lehrer (2008) and Brown (2007) are venerable exceptions, this paucity of scholarship is particularly evident in the early nineteenth century. However, in other periods, specifically in the early modern era, scholars have successfully used textual based evidence (reviews, diary entries, letters) as well as extra textual material (visual depictions, costumes) to interrogate Shakespearean and other dramatic performances within their historical and performative contexts, proving that such an approach can make serious contributions to interrogating drama⁶².

Returning to the nineteenth century. Merle Tonnies in her article, 'Laughter in Nineteenth-Century British Theatre', also acknowledges the difficulties facing the theatrical scholar. She navigates this complexity by usefully comparing the critical discourse surrounding humour to how the playwright might, in a variety of early nineteenth-century plays, "invite the audience to react in certain ways" (2002, p. 99). Her discussion for example, notes the movement away from superiority into the concept of incongruity in humour theory, but she asserts that much on-stage drama revolved around the former rather than the latter. Tonnies' work does not acknowledge certain 'exceptions' to laughing at superiority such as Beattie's view that exaggerated facial features can produce laughter, or Kant's moral judgment that annoying behaviour can generate a deserved superior response from others. However,

⁶² See for example Chedgozy, Greenhalgh and Shaunessy (2011)

her work infers an important paradox between the privileging of intellectual forms of humour in critical discourse and the prevalence of lower forms of humour on the stage. My own approach builds on this observation and Tonnies' methodology by analysing a diverse range of sources relating to the dramatic mode alongside play texts themselves and other written and visual media. Often this evidence is drawn from what the critic Gerard Genette describes as the "paratextual" literatures that interact with the 'text': diaries, articles, reviews, letters, songs and other examples (Genette, 1987). Moreover, the fact that many dramatic, popular entertainments often cross over into other modes of transmission and are remediated into different visual or textual forms, provides evidence of popular consumption by a child audience or readership. My analysis draws on these eclectic sources to evidence a rounded picture of the dramatic mode and the child in the early nineteenth century.

This chapter features a number of texts that have received little attention in scholarly publications. However, the originality of my approach is in reading these works alongside the paratextual literature described above as well as through the lens of the performance response theories already described. In this respect I follow Susan Bennett's blending of Hans Robert Jauss' insistence on a synchronic approach to performance merged with Stanley Fish's concept of the interpretive community. This allows the contemplation of "the reader's role as arising from two horizons [...] the literary horizon of expectations suggested by the text read [and] the social horizon of expectations of the reader" (Bennett, 1997, p. 51). In this way the cultural, philosophical and literary context can be analysed alongside the effect of personal response on a text at a particular moment in time.

This final chapter of my thesis aims to show the importance of dramatic literature to a juvenile audience, and how humour in this era was not just read by young people, but was frequently seen, heard and performed by children of all social

classes. Interrogating drama in my final chapter also cements the presence of performance in my previous chapters: from fairground entertainments, through the telling of stories in the Christmas annuals, to the masquerades of the papillonnades, drama often has an intrinsic link with humour and pleasure for children and, as Marah Gubar states has the potential to “transform” the way in which scholars “historicize and theorize about children’s literature and indeed childhood itself” (2012, p. v).

Drama, Humour and The Child in the Early Nineteenth Century

Drama and the theatre have frequently evoked powerful emotions and prejudices. From the earliest Greek philosophers such as Plato who regarded drama as merely a mimetic debasement of real life, to Puritan commentators who perceived performance as inherently sinful, this prejudice against the theatrical context is deeply-rooted across history and culture. In regard to children and drama in the early nineteenth century, the picture becomes even more complicated with young people caught up in contemporary debate concerning drama that centered around binaries of public and private; comic and tragic/heroic; and ‘low’/ ‘high’ culture. In middle-class circles in particular, the private, domestic sphere was often considered a ‘safe’ place in which children could utilise drama as part of a pedagogic and social process. Madame de Genlis and the Théâtre d’Éducation movement in France had found favour in England at the turn of the century and, by the early nineteenth century, writers as diverse as Maria Edgeworth and Hannah More were utilising drama in order to allow children to actively explore moral and religious issues in a performative manner. Likewise, the performance of texts (whether originally intended as dramatic pieces or not) by children in a familial or a scholastic setting was often seen to aid children in their acculturation into the adult world. In a similar way to the pages of the Christmas

annuals, the private space was viewed as an arena where children could experience drama, both comic and otherwise with a certain degree of safety and control and, importantly, encompassing a useful moral aim. However, in terms of drama in the public theatre, opinions varied. Many Evangelicals considered the theatres to be full of vice and licentiousness and that viewing all forms of life on the public stage (and in the audience) was not conducive to a good moral education for young people. For example, in a sermon by the popular clergyman John Angell James at Carr's Lane Meeting House in January 1824, the pastor roundly condemns the theatre as a "corrupter of public morals". He goes on to state that for the "young man" "the language, the music, and the company [of the theatre], are all adapted to a sensual taste—and calculated to demoralize the mind!" (1860, p. 4). For James no aspect of the theatre remains untainted by corruption; not audience, not music nor the words of the drama itself. Moreover, in regard specifically to comedy, the prognosis could be even more damning. Hannah More, despite writing juvenile closet dramas, and notwithstanding her view that "[a] well-written tragedy is, perhaps, one of the noblest efforts of the human mind" (1835, p. 6), was a strong opponent of comic performance. She was particularly concerned about visceral humour on the stage:

Far be it from me to wish to restore the obsolete rubbish of ignorance and folly with which the monkish legends furnished out the rude materials of our early drama [...] the superstitions of the cloister were considered as suitable topics for the diversions of the stage; and celestial intelligences, uttering the sentiments and language, and blended with the buffooneries of Bartholomew fair, were regarded as appropriate subjects of merry-making for a holiday audience. (1835 p. 7)

More's comment here relates to the mystery plays and carnival events that characterised the medieval period. Religion was, in her view, an unsuitable subject of which to make light. However, also imbedded within More's words is a judgment concerning the physical humour on which many popular nineteenth-century

entertainments such as pantomime were predicated.

Such pantomimic performances echoed the carnival humour of medieval celebrations with their grotesque dances and reliance on visceral humour and gesture as well as extravagant stage effects and spectacles that derived from street culture; the “buffooneries of Bartholomew fair” to which More so damningly refers. More’s comments underline a theme that resurfaces frequently concerning children and drama in this period. Tragedy can be a worthy subject for drama, particularly when performance is in private rather than taking place within that “corrupter of public morals”, the theatre; yet comedy is much more suspect. Indeed, in the public space of the theatre, laughter is frequently viewed in the negative light evidenced by More. In *Peeps into London for Good Children* by Jane and Ann Taylor, for example, the authors explicitly link humour in the theatrical space with threat. For the Taylors the playhouse is a space where “riot and merriment” prevail (1809, p. 40), and is thus a totally unsuitable place for children. The shared laughter of a massed crowd that can seem so appealing, can also signify danger. As an anxious Joint Committee for Censorship and Licensing states in regard to the theatre, “[t]he existence of an audience, moved by the same emotions, its members conscious of one another’s presence, [can] intensifies the influence of what is done and spoken on stage (qtd in Bennett, 1997, p. 41). Indeed, as Marc Baer attests in his book *Theatre and Disorder in Late Georgian London* (1992), disturbances such as the Old Price Riots of 1809, were a not unfrequent occurrence in this period, thus adding fuel to the anxieties detailed above.

Yet, despite all these concerns I will also cite much evidence in my following discussion to suggest that children were frequently counted amongst the audience in theatres throughout London and beyond. It seems young people attended comedies as well as tragedies with their middle-class parents, while lower-class children attended

performances with their employers and alone. Across the classes, humorous dramatic culture played a large part in everyday life and experience for many urban children. As such the sphere of influence and the dialogic interaction of performance with other written and visual texts merits enhanced critical attention.

One of the ways in which juvenile theatre-going is evidenced in this period is through literary representation. Peter Borsay outlines in 'Children, Adolescents and Fashionable Society' (2006) that attending the theatre may have been one way of 'culturing' the middle-class child into the realms of adult society and in this respect theatre was used for education as well as for entertainment. In this respect, Charles Lamb's poem 'Home Delights' taken from *Poetry for Children* (1809) seems to reflect Borsay's hypothesis that wealthy children were taken to theatrical performances as well as other social events to widen out their social experience: "To operas and balls my cousins take me, /And fond of plays my new-made friend would make me" (p. 118). Such literary representations are supported by Lamb's autobiographical musings in the guise of Elia in *The London Magazine* where, in an essay entitled 'My First Play', the author talks of being taken to the pantomime and other dramatic performances from the tender age of six (1821, pp. 603-5). A lifelong fan of the theatre, the dramatic mode experienced in childhood influenced Lamb's adult writings, and the same can also be said for the work of Thomas Hood and Charles Dickens as well as Jane Austen, Thomas de Quincey and numerous other Romantic era writers⁶³. In the case of Austen, Penny Gay (2008) explores in depth Austen's regular theatre attendance as a child with her family in Bath and in London as well as the social reading at home and the family's amateur theatricals that usually involved comedy and melodrama. Moreover, it seems these writers were not alone:

⁶³ See Lodge, 2007 for a discussion of the dramaticity of Thomas Hood's work (pp. 73)

the extent of middle and upper class theatre-going in this era is evidenced in the fact that even Royal children attended the theatre. A report from *The Times* on Friday Feb 12th 1802, for example, reports juvenile royal patronage in the shape of the daughters of George III at a double bill of comedy and pantomime. The text states simply: “Their Majesties, accompanied by all the princesses, honoured this theatre [Covent Garden] yesterday evening, to see the *Comedy of The Poor Gentleman*, and the New Pantomime of *Harlequin Almanack*” (p. 2). Covent Garden was, of course, one of only two ‘legimate’ theatres in London at this time, and thus to some extent retained an aspect of respectability. Nevertheless, the presence of royal children at such performances illustrates how, although these productions were not written specifically for children, it was to a large extent considered appropriate that young people attend the theatre.

The evidence of theatrical attendance for children in middle and upper class households, is not however limited to these famous audience members. For many ordinary families too, the theatre in the early nineteenth century had lost some of its associations with licentiousness and instead seems to have been embraced as part of full engagement with urban life for young people. Although engravings and prints from this period cannot be taken as absolute representations of reality, children do appear frequently in depictions of the theatre. In Fig. 5.1, for example, three small children sit with their nurse at performance at the Coburg theatre in the 1820s, whilst George Cruickshank depicts a family group, including a young boy and older sister, sitting in a theatre box watching Grimaldi’s last performance (Fig. 5.2)



Fig. 5.1. Stow, James. 'Coburg Theatre Surry [sic], as first opened 11 May 1818'. London: Robert Wilkinson, 1819.

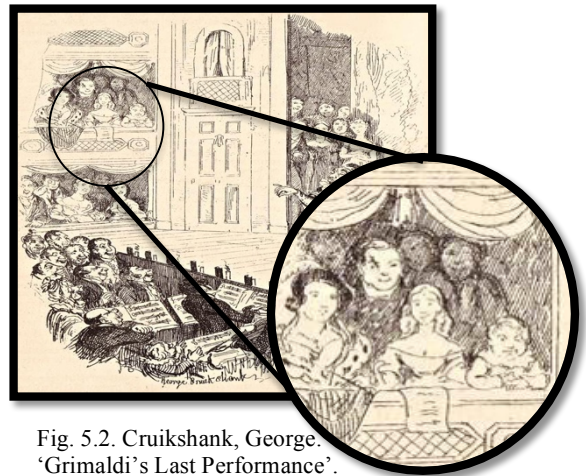


Fig. 5.2. Cruikshank, George. 'Grimaldi's Last Performance'. *Memoirs of Joseph Grimaldi*. Ed. Charles Dickens. 1838, p. 238.

Evidence also suggests that children were on occasions specifically invited into the theatre to experience humorous entertainments created for them. An advertisement from Sadler's Wells in July 1827, for example, details a performance to celebrate the anniversary of the coronation of King George. This is an event specifically designed to "entertain and delight their young friends" and was to include a programme that drew from both theatrical entertainments and wider street performance. The juvenile audience could expect to see a pantomime, *Harlequin Hyacinth*, and a range of spectacular entertainments: fire balloons, circus tumblers and a "variety of spirited dances". This designated "Grand Juvenile Fete", thus evidences a kind of 'half-way house' between the street, the fair and the theatre. Concentrating on humour and entertainment, this event illustrates the encouragement of a young audience into the confines of the playhouse rather than a rejection of this locus⁶⁴.

Similarly, the market for theatrical prints is further evidence that children, particularly from middle-class backgrounds engaged extensively with theatrical

⁶⁴ These references are taken from an advertisement in the Richard Percival Collection at the British Library (see bibliography for full reference)

performance. As part of the print culture that emerged in the eighteenth century, theatrical prints were sold alongside the satirical works of Gillray and Rowlandson in many establishments in London. The theatrical portrait was usually a single sheet depicting a principal actor in the costume of their most famous role. These were frequently bought by young people as posters might be today and reflect a strong identification amongst this group in particular with the extravagance and allure of the stage. In a fledgling celebrity culture where actors and actresses became hugely famous, these portraits were part of the way in which stage drama was remediated into the popular sphere⁶⁵.

For children of lower-class families also the low ticket prices of many theatres meant that partaking in drama was also often quite a common occurrence. Indeed, Percival Collection at the British Library pertaining to Sadler's Wells Theatre contains newspaper reports and other evidence about a tragedy that occurred at the theatre in 1807. When a crowd in the theatre mistakenly thought a cry of "fire" had rung out in the auditorium, a stampede ensued and twelve people were crushed to death⁶⁶. The report of the deaths states the average age of the victims was just nineteen with the youngest being a nine-year-old girl who had gone to the theatre with her employer as well as Benjamin Price, an eleven-year-old boy given permission to see the show with a neighbour. From the newspaper description, all the victims seem to have been from a working-class background and were positioned in the pit, the cheapest part of the theatre. What this sad circumstance (and other evidence) suggests is that children from all walks of life experienced theatrical performance on a fairly regular basis. This is a vital point as a mixed class audience of children has the effect of 'democratising' the stage in regard to both the drama presented upon it and also in

⁶⁵ See West, 1991 for further discussion of the theatrical print

⁶⁶ See bibliography for full details of this text

terms of the literature based on stage characters that were translated into other media - books, chapbooks, annuals, harlequinades and, importantly, the toy theatres of the early 1800s. The accessibility of drama and performance of this era meant that the comic forms of this mode were enjoyed not just by those that could afford the written literature of the burgeoning children's book industry, but also those children for whom the theatre or street entertainments formed a vital escape from the harsh realities of an impoverished life. Having thus established a background of theatre-going across the social classes, my chapter now continues with a discussion of performance in the more public sphere of the street.

Carnival humour: Street entertainments and Punch and Judy

In an anonymous article in *The Monthly Review* of 1828 the author discusses the subject of dramatic entertainment to be found in urban, public sites. The author states that there are a "great variety of musical entertainments in the streets" (p. 377), and although bemoaning the fact that such diversions are "very much on the wane" and that we are "not so merry as our fathers" (p. 378), the writer does describe in detail several entertainments that involve children as participants and onlookers. As well as the boy "Balancers" who "earn a comfortable livelihood by their admirable dexterity in managing balls, rings and knives", the author also describes a "little boy, dressed in cap and blue frock, with a violin in his hand" who "plays, sings, and dances at the same time [and] contrives, by the most sportive gestures, and a harsh irregular drawl, to make people laugh even in songs that have no real connection with the comic impressions". His audience is drawn from the "circle of juvenile listeners that generally surround him" (p. 377). This young boy is providing an unequivocally comic entertainment to his juvenile audience with the express purpose of provoking

laughter (and presumably deriving financial reward). Such impromptu performances as they are described in this article, allow children from all social classes access to the kind of ‘carnival’ humour that Bakhtin describes in *Rabelais and his World*, but which is also so roundly condemned by Hannah More. This visceral humour centres on the body. There are no conventional spoken or written words here only “sportive gestures” and comic sounds, and the form relies upon these exaggerated body movements to generate the amusement. It is, however a humour that is ambivalent in nature; the performer draws in his audience through his comic musical performance, the gathered group laugh at the incongruous nature of the boy’s gestures set against his music, but in turn the performer then treats his listeners “with the most ludicrous air of contempt” (p. 377). The entertainment thus gains comic momentum through the performer’s retention of a serious and aloof aspect that simultaneously ridicules and intensifies his audience’s laughter. The humour is, in Bakhtin’s terms “gay, triumphant, and at the same time mocking, deriding” (1984, pp. 11-12). This carnival laughter encompasses audience and performer, with boundaries blurred between the two, “it is the laughter of all the people” as Bakhtin categorises it (p. 11) Such performance relies on hyperbolic gesture and spectacular effects as well as concrete interaction between audience and actor. It is also dynamic relationship and like a child reading the Christmas annuals, the ‘text’ changes with each performance/reading. While this makes the dramatic mode difficult to interrogate, as Greenhalgh suggests, it is also a vital part of the “prevailing comic culture” for the nineteenth century child that Lypp and Donald Gray propose. Such a widespread influence of drama on everyday life is also evidenced in the vestiges of street theatre in other literary modes of transmission during the early nineteenth-century period. John Plunkett (2007) for example, traces the influence of the optical qualities of the peep show in the texts of Elizabeth Semple’s *The Magic Lantern* (1806) and the physically ‘up-side-down’

nature of the entertainment on Ann Taylor's comic text, *Signor Topsy Turvey* (1810). Likewise, Richard Altick in *The Shows of London* (1978), also traces the connection of entertainments such as magic lantern shows with theatrical performances such as that of the early pantomime *Harlequin's Invasion* shown at Covent Garden Theatre in 1759. What such evidence demonstrates is that street shows were an integral and influential part of everyday life in the early nineteenth century. However, one specific example of popular entertainment stands above the others: at the centre of the following discussion is the Punch and Judy puppet show, a street entertainment that was also widely remediated in literature for children and in other performative modes throughout this era.

In the early nineteenth-century the puppet show transitioned from a paid entertainment in a fairground booth to a free performance on both urban streets and in rural villages. The itinerant showman now made a living, like other street performers, by passing around a bowl or hat in order to exact monetary appreciation. During the early part of the nineteenth century, contemporary written accounts and pictorial representations of 'Punch and Judy' demonstrate a mixed audience of age and social class for such performances. Sketches by George Cruikshank, for example, show children following an itinerant puppet master as he moves to set up his performance (Fig. 5.3), and, in a different sketch entitled 'Candler Street Fantoccini' Cruikshank depicts a puppet show with numerous juvenile onlookers drawn from a wide cross section of society (Fig. 5.4).



Fig. 5.3. Cruikshank, George. 'Punch and Judy' c. 1827.



Fig. 5.4 Cruikshank, George. 'Candler's Street Fantoccini' 1827.

Although images such as these cannot be read as an accurate reflection of reality, the appearance of juvenile figures in many visual texts of this era suggests that children were audience members. In a similar way, a lengthy poem appearing in *The Monthly Magazine* in 1826 ascribes a juvenile audience to Punch and Judy. It describes how, in London many “[s]end forth the toddling child, or tott’ring Goody. / To gaze upon the pranks of Punch and Judy” (p. 260) and in another section describes, “children, wrapt in dumb amusement” watching such a performance (p. 264)

In 1828, two years after the poem ‘Punch and Judy’ appeared in *The Monthly Magazine*, a young writer named John Payne Collier attended a specially commissioned private performance of a Punch and Judy show by the famous puppeteer, Giovanni Piccini. Also in attendance was the illustrator George Cruikshank. The aim of the performance was to allow Collier and Cruikshank to ‘transcribe’ the written and visual features of the show. When the text appeared it was prefaced by a (mock) scholarly introduction by Collier and accompanied by Cruikshank’s now famous illustrations that capture the essential vibrancy of the show (Fig. 5.5).

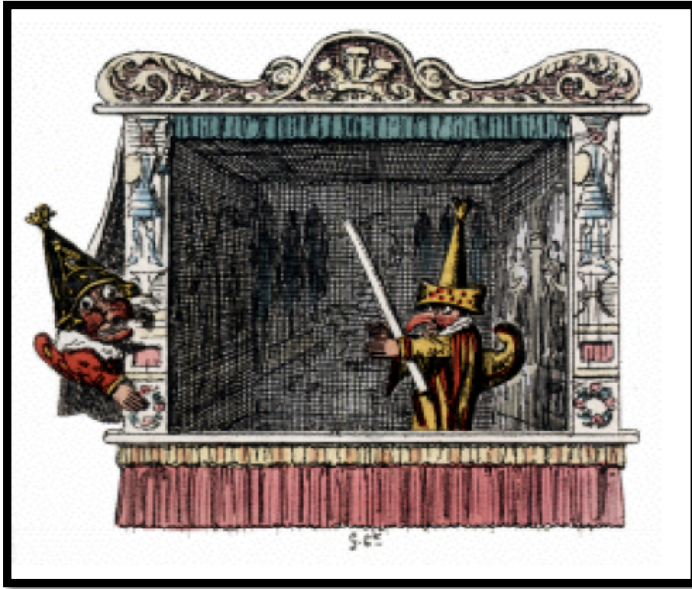


Fig. 5.5. Cruikshank, George. Plate from *The Tragical Comedy or, Comical Tragedy of Punch and Judy*. John Payne Collier, 1828.

Just as the street performances of ‘Punch and Judy’ frequently attracted large crowds, so the textual version was also very successful. It was reprinted later in 1828 with new information added to the introduction by Collier and was again reissued in 1832, 1844, and several more times until the turn of the century (Speaight, 1969, p. 186). In *Be Merry and Wise*, Alderson posits the theory that the scholarship of Collier’s text, with its narrative of the history and tradition of Punch, effectively validated the humour of the show and allowed Punch’s character to move from the fringes of children’s literature “to somewhere near center stage” (2006, p. 244).

Certainly, it appears that Collier’s text brought a new dimension to this street entertainment allowing it to enter the realms of literary production. What Collier and Cruikshank create through both text and images is a fascinating melding of scholarship and antiquarianism with an oral, folk tradition that mirrors John Harris’ similar approach in his *Dame Trot* and *Mother Hubbard* texts (see Chapter 4). Collier, however, goes further than Harris by transcribing, with a fair degree of similitude, the ephemeral and oral qualities of the street performance alongside the physical carnival humour of the show. These comic aspects revolve around gesture,

violence, slapstick and corporal pleasure - food, drink and sex, which whilst entertaining, are also the elements of comedy in the show that makes Punch, as Alderson suggests, a “subversive presence” with his “deplorable behaviour” (pp. 244-5). Moreover, these are also aspects that position the humour of the Punch and Judy in direct opposition to the carefully controlled and sanctioned laughter of the Christmas annuals and even the buffoonery and nonsense that I have discussed in relation to children’s chapbooks. In Scene II of Collier’s text, for example Scaramouch and Punch trade blows:

Punch [...] [Takes the stick and moves slowly about, singing the tune of the Marche des Marseillois. He hits Scaramouch a slight blow on his high cap, as if by accident]

Scaramouch. You play very well, Mr Punch. Now let me try, I will give you a lesson how to play the fiddle. [Takes the stick and dances to the same tune, hitting Punch a hard blow on the back of the head.] There’s sweet music for you.

Punch. I no like you playing so well as my own. Let me again. [Takes the stick, and dances as before: in the course of the dance he gets behind Scaramouch, and, with a violent blow, knocks his head clean off his shoulders.] How you like that tune, my good friend? That sweet music, or sour music, eh! - He! he! he! [Laughing and throwing away the stick.] (Act 1 Scene 2)

Like the straight-faced performer-boy in the street, so Punch also enacts an air of insouciance and innocence (moving softly, whistling), that is at odds with the physical violence he commits. This gap between his pretence and his intention is the comic incongruity to which the audience is privy and Scaramouch (and Punch’s other later victims) are not. The audience thus becomes complicit in Punch’s deception and although his actions are deplorable, this dramatic ploy ensures that the audience shares, and in fact delights, in his ‘cleverness’. These tactics escalate during the course of the show with Punch finally outsmarting the hangman and even the devil

himself. The stage directions that are textualised in Collier's work allow this dramatic irony to take place and for the audience to be on the side of Punch, for him to become (anti-)hero instead of villain.

Aiding this perception of Punch as an unlikely hero is the foregrounding of Punch's unique version of a carpe diem mentality. The opening song in Collier's text reads:

Mr Punch is one jolly good fellow,
His dress is all scarlet and yellow,
And if now and then he gets mellow.
It's only among his good friends.
His money most freely he spends;
To laugh and grow fat he intends,
With the girls he's a rogue and a rover;
He lives, while he can, upon clover;
When he dies - it's only all over;
And there Punch's comedy ends. (Act 1, Scene 1)

Punch gets drunk, ("mellow"), spends money rather than saves it, eats what he likes, sleeps with whomever he pleases and takes pleasure where he can. He "laugh[s] and grow[s] fat". It is the kind of "lottery mentality" that O'Malley drawing on Gary Kelly connects with "the plebian awareness that any day could bring [...] fatal catastrophes", thus the only option is to live in the present (2003, p. 8). O'Malley traces a move away from this mindset by the middle classes for whom "hard work and self-denial became a more rational and desirable defense against possible misfortune" (p.8). The popularity of the puppet show is thus partly explained by the attraction of this freedom vested in Punch, both from workaday care and also from the fetters of authority. Punch does what he likes and receives no punishment for it - on the contrary, he receives the applause and the laughter of the audience.

Such laughter is also supported by the retention in Collier's text of the theatrical frame that marks out this story as outside of real life. From the "violent

blow” in the example above that knocks Scaramouch’s “head clean off his shoulders”, to the audience members that appear in Cruikshank’s illustrations, Collier’s work textualises the exaggerated and visual aspects of the show. The reader, like the watching public outside the puppet booth is under no illusions that this is art not life, and as such this is a cue to laugh at the hyperbolic violence and mad-cap capers rather than be upset by them. It is the kind of frame of interpretation that, as I have discussed, Louise Peacock identifies for slapstick humour. Thus Punch’s violent comedy is forced into the realm of the symbolic where it is possible for this character to triumph over authority figures and over everyday life, becoming in the process a folk hero, a representative of ‘everyman’.

In discussing violence as a characteristic of carnival humour, Bakhtin emphasises this symbolic nature of violence: “abuse never assumes the character merely of personal invective” he states, but stands in for something “universal” - the ability of the common man to overturn authority at least for a short time (1984, p. 212). Such an explanation for the attraction of violent humour, is also born out in other remediations of this street entertainment for a child audience. In Orlando Hodgson’s *Punch's Puppet Show, Or the Humours of Punch & Judy* (c. 1840), for example, the author transcribes the violence vested on Judy:

“[...] Hush! Judy, hush! Don’t keep up such a riot,
Here’s the dog Toby bids you pray be quiet,
So then you won’t?”; Enraged Punch threw
her down The floor hard was, and she fairly
crack’d her crown.

The accompanying illustrations depict in the manner of Cruikshank, the scenes as played out in the physical Punch and Judy booth, thus foregrounding this text as a remediation of performance with the booth clearly visible in the image (Fig. 5.6). In a similar text by D. Martin entitled *The Tragical Comedy of Punch and Judy* (c. 1830),

the illustrator also incorporates the audience into the image through the heads in the foreground that change in every scene (Fig. 5.7). Likewise, in William Walker's chapbook text, *Punch and Judy* (c. 1840), Walker reproduces an abridged version of the street entertainment. This publication textualises the scene where Punch puts the hangman into his own noose and then "caper'd and danc'd, and in ecstasy swung" (p.8) The accompanying illustration, in a cruder but clear echo of Cruikshank's illustration, also features the fairground booth (Fig. 5.8)⁶⁷.

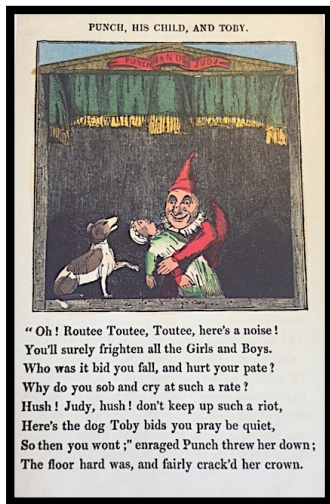


Fig. 5.6. [Anon.] Plate from *Punch's Puppet Show, or, the Humours of Punch and Judy*. London: Orlando Hodgson, c. 1840.

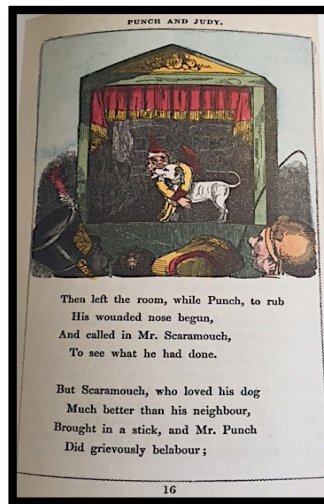


Fig. 5.7. [Anon.] Plate from *The Tragical Comedy of Punch and Judy*. London: D. Martin, c. 1830, p.23.

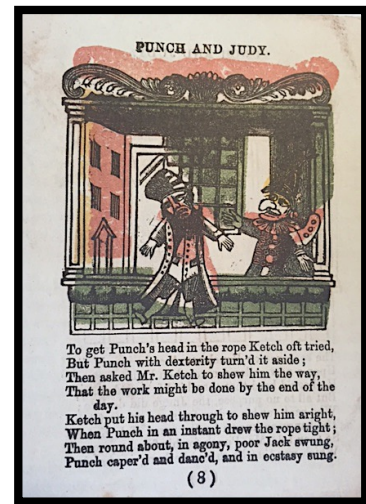


Fig. 5.8. [Anon.] Plate from *Punch and Judy*. Otley, UK: William Walker, c. 1840, p.8.

The humour in these children's texts is the very antithesis of what has hitherto been deemed appropriate for a juvenile audience. Indeed, the question of why comedy based around such taboo behaviour - wife beating, infanticide, murder and the continued overturning of authority figures - has been so appealing to both children and adults was still being pondered in 1872 when the 'Punch and Judy' show had all

⁶⁷ These illustrations and a brief summary of the three works appear in Alderson and de Marez Oyens' *Be Merry and Wise* (pp. 245 & 247).

but disappeared from the streets and had become ‘domesticated’ as primarily a nursery entertainment. In *Harper’s Weekly* (1872) an article asks:

Why children should be fond of such an undomestic drama as portrayed in the representation of Mr Punch’s adventures can only be accounted for by that love of the horrible so innate even in infantile nature, (qtd. in Crone 2006, p. 107)

Here, the *Harper’s Weekly* observation touches on, as Rosalind Crone suggests in *Violent Victorians* “the violent, anxious, destructive, and even sadistic character of a child’s imagination” (2012, p. 75). It is the same character that Alexander Bain describes in *Education as a Science* as “the zest of malevolence” that touches on much playground humour where there is “usually a core element of degradation” (qtd. in Billig, 2005, pp. 96-7) and which is also to be found in the violence against adult characters that provokes laughter in juvenile readers of modern writers such as Roald Dahl.

The humour contained within the Punch and Judy performance is also defended by Charles Dickens in a letter to Mary Tayler on November 6, 1849. Here he states:

In my opinion the Street Punch is one of those extravagant reliefs from the realities of life which would lose its hold upon the people if it were made moral and instructive. I regard it as quite harmless in its influence and as an outrageous joke which no one in existence would think of regarding as an incentive to any kind of action or as a model for any kind of conduct. It is possible, I think, that one secret source of pleasure very generally derived from this performance... is the satisfaction the spectator feels in the circumstance that likenesses of men and women can be so knocked about, without any pain or suffering. (Hartley, 2012, p. 204)

As Schlicke (1985) discusses in his book analysing Dickens’ engagement with popular entertainment, the author was a great champion of street shows and popular amusements. Circus performers, street entertainers and other itinerant showman often

feature in his books, thus his view here that Punch is an “extravagant relief from the realities of life” is typical of his ideological stance and also associates him with the function of humour in the carnival as expounded by Bakhtin as a relief valve from the workaday⁶⁸. However, the fact that Dickens feels it necessary to defend this type of violent humour as “harmless in its influence” indicates that others did not necessarily share his view. This defensive attitude is also evidenced in the title page of D.

Martin’s text which contains dedication to Punch: “I love thee Punch with all thy faults and failings / ‘Spite of the straight-laced folks and all their railings” (1840, title page). The complexity of attitudes to humour in this period muddies the waters regarding the ‘benign’ nature of Punch’s comedy.

Another reason for Dickens’ championing of street culture is his view that such entertainments were representative of an English way of life under threat from Enlightenment discourse. Such an element is visible in the review of street entertainments in the *New Monthly* with which I opened, where the author decries the decline of street entertainments in the face of rational knowledge: “It is a curious fact, that England is about the only country where a spread of knowledge, or as it is sometimes sneering called, ‘the march of intellect,’ has a tendency to restrain the operation of the animal spirits” (1828, p. 378). The physicality of humour (“animal spirits”) is here opposed to intellectual culture and, as I have interrogated in Chapter 4, to the idea that societal ‘progress’ is mirrored in the development of humour from crude to refined. Such an ideological stance is also illustrated in a long ‘philosophical’ poem about Punch and Judy in *The Monthly Magazine* (1826). Here the anonymous author humorously employs the mock-heroic form to praise the virtues of Punch-as-hero. These verses inscribe a hyperbolic glorification of Punch that is highly amusing,

⁶⁸ See also Hollington, 1984

however, the author is also making a similar point to Dickens regarding the endangerment of these types of entertainments:

For England's ancient pastimes vanish fast,
In this political prosaic age;
For them, 'twould seem, oblivion's die is cast.
Because we moderns are so very sage
As to despise, abhor, whate'er, when past
Leaves not its profits in the ledger's page,
We scorn the gay, the playful, and the comical.
Commercial all, and grave, and economical.
The rustic morris-dancers, where are they?
How few the merry May-games which we see!
E'en Christmas sports fade one by one away.
And fairs our moral statesmen deem too free;
Or hold it in their hearts the wiser way
To measure all things by the rule of three;
And thus enact, no pleasure shall have birth.
That leads to nothing save immediate mirth, (p. 261)

As I have discussed in relation to folk culture and chapbooks, here the poet idealises the humour of Punch and gives it a philosophical and (ironically) a moral imperative in saving the nation from its so-called "wiser way". In this context the comic violence of the show becomes, as for Bakhtin, a symbol of the life cycle "the strange epitome of life" where death and rebirth, violence and love are positioned on an endless wheel:

But who shall paint that drama? - 'twould employ
Weeks, months, to go through all its operations –
Th'extreme vicissitudes of grief and joy.
Embraces, quarrels, reconciliations –
Blows which, were either mortal, must destroy;
Falls, faintings, dyings, revivifications –
Descents - a reappearances - love - strife,
And all the strange epitome of life. (p. 258)

In the Bakhtinian sense that "death is not a negation of life [...] but part of life as a whole" (1984, p. 50), Punch's violence is here turned into mere "harmless frolics" (p. 261), the "vicissitudes of grief and joy". In an echo of Dickens' view of this entertainment as "quite harmless in its innocence" the author ends the poem asking

for a continuation of such amusements: “Wisdom must have spice of wit to flavor it, / And thus is Punch with me, with all, a favourite” (p. 262). This ‘domestication’ of the Punch and Judy into a simple ‘entertainment’ continued after mid-century when, as Rosalind Crone points out, the Punch performers often entered wealthy drawing rooms to entertain children at Christmas and at birthday parties. For these occasions the violent comedy was often toned down and some kind of punishment added for Punch’s misdemeanors. However, in this period, although John Payne Collier’s text may have helped to ‘validate’ the Punch and Judy show to a certain extent, the critical components of carnival violence and grotesquerie continued to be remediated in texts for children. Although it is possible to argue that the violence of this slapstick humour is rendered innocuous by the retention of the theatrical frame within these texts, the humour of Punch nevertheless evidences the prevalence of low forms of humour in children’s literature. Indeed, such comedic forms reach their apotheosis in the subject of my next dramatic work - the pantomime.

Pantomime humour and the child

Pantomime in the early nineteenth-century was a dramatic comic genre that enjoyed huge popularity. Its origins lay in the Italian ‘Commedia del Arte’ and it started to appear on the English stage in the late 1700s. In 1806 the famous clown Joseph Grimaldi appeared in the show *Mother Goose* to enormous popular success and critical acclaim. This became the longest running pantomime in history and cast this dramatic mode as a staple of the British theatrical scene. Although, critics such as George Speaight have suggested that Regency “pantomime was not originally a children’s entertainment at all” (1969, p. 28), much evidence regarding theatre

audiences, contemporary reviews of pantomimes and other factors indicate a rather more complex relationship between children and this particular comic mode that has wide resonance for humour for children in this period. There is, in the first instance, a direct dialogic relationship between the formulaic frame story of the Regency pantomime, usually based around a folk or fairy tale, and the proliferation of similar stories into literature for children through the burgeoning children's book industry of the early nineteenth century. Many of these tales have a humorous base, and as I have discussed in the previous chapter, characters such as Old Dame Trot were remediated into pantomime as well as encapsulated in other varied forms of juvenile literature.

Harlequin and Old Dame Trot was performed at the Surrey theatre in 1837. Similarly, *Harlequin Jack and Jill* was presented at the Lyceum theatre in 1812 six years after James Aldis published *Jack and Jill and Old Dame Gill*, an illustrated text in verse with the subtitle "Read it who will, / They'll laugh their fill". Indeed, the titles of early nineteenth-century pantomime read to the modern eye like a nursery bookshelf, where the pantomime of *Jack and the Beanstalk* (Lyceum 1810) is closely followed by *Harlequin Whittington* in 1814 performed at Covent Garden, and Sinbad from *Tales from the Arabian Nights* becomes *Harlequin Sinbad* at Drury Lane in the same year. (John Harris had also drawn from *The Arabian Nights* for his comically grotesque *Little Hunchback* in 1817). As I have demonstrated in previous sections, dramatic entertainment often drew widely upon popular and folk culture, and in turn written culture took the dramatic mode as the foundation for many of its works. The different incarnations of these popular stories can be read synchronically as a "geneology of affiliations" where each new interpretation has an "honorific" debt to other forms (Bolter and Grusin, 2000, p. 55). Here the existing popularity of these stories in chapbook literature also renders probable a degree of theatrical success with a child audience and vice-versa. Susan Greenhalgh highlights the particular

appropriateness of the dramatic form to such a dialogic relationship stating:

Plays like other cultural forms, emerge from and engage with the culture that shapes them, but the ways in which they in turn also shape the culture that produces them can be viewed as more direct and visible in a mode of cultural production which is inherently and inescapably interactive and dynamic. (2009, p. 269)

The attraction of pantomime to a juvenile audience is particularly evident in the remediation of these plays into the realm of the toy theatre, a subject to which I will return, but in terms of the initial dramatic performance, pantomime in this era frequently interacted with the dynamics of the adult/child relationship in regard to textual and performative variants. Such an association is foregrounded in a review in *The Times* on December 28th 1819 concerning a production of *Jack and the Bean Stalk; or, Harlequin and the Ogre* at Drury Lane:

In conformity with long-established usage this theatre produced a new pantomime yesterday evening called *Jack and the Bean Stalk; or, Harlequin and the Ogre*. It is founded upon a story of the same title, once very popular amongst the inmates of the nursery; and owing to the satisfaction with which we retrace the associations of our early years, enlists our feelings on its side, and disarms us of the severity of criticism (p. 3)

The intimation in this commentary is that it is a certain “satisfaction” with the familiarity of the frame story of the pantomime that has produced pleasure in the mind of the reviewer. Indeed, the critical position that pantomime, with its relationship to folk and fairy tales, provides a kind of conduit back to the childhood of the adult members of the audience is commonplace in many reviews and is part of an ideological positioning for pantomime that interpolates the child and childhood into its very centre in both a positive and a negative manner. For example, another review in *The Times* in January 1816 of the pantomime *Harlequin Horner or the Christmas Pie* asks: “where is the man or woman who at some period of childhood has not

sympathized with the pie-loving Jack Horner!” The review goes on to state:

it is an additional tie of connection between parents and children, and by supplying a common focus of interest, excites more intensely that kindly family feeling which the business of the world is perpetually weakening or destroying (p. 3).

This review explicitly ties together a mixed audience of adults and children into the spectacle of the pantomime and asserts a higher purpose to this entertainment: to evoke, “kindly, family feeling”, as opposed to the reviewer’s perception of the undermining of family values through changes in social and economic structures. Such sentiments represent the conservative voice of this newspaper in times of dramatic social change, whilst also reflecting the kind of ideological positioning that, as I have discussed in Chapter 3, circulated frequently in regard to Christmas: the strengthening of domestic ties through genial and inclusive entertainments. Although pantomimes in this era were by no means restricted to the Christmas season, and did not really become so until after mid-century, there is evidence that pantomimes long before this date were often connected by commentators with the kind of ‘sanctioned’ humour that I have discussed in terms of the Christmas annuals, and as such were considered appropriate for the whole family.

Reviews of the “Christmas Pantomimes” in the *Weekly True Sun* of 1837, for example, employ the kind of nostalgic vocabulary for a past time (in this case, childhood) that is also a feature of many early nineteenth-century narratives concerning the joy of Christmas, and as I have discussed also enters the discourse surrounding Punch and Judy. The reviewer speaks of pantomimes evoking a feeling of “tumbling laughingly and almost unconsciously backwards into the happy valley of juvenile folly”. “Delightful scenes of childhood”, the reviewer states, “how gladly we revisit you” (p. 1397). Humour is at the centre of this description and can be linked

with a Freudian analysis of humour, particularly in the work of Ernst Kris (a follower of Freud), who “stressed the regressively infantile elements within laughter” that allow a “return to the happiness of childhood”. According to Kris, through laughter “we can throw off the fetters of logical thought and revel in a long-forgotten freedom” (qtd. in Gattrel 166). “Logical thought”, in other words, rationality, is in Kris’ definition the province of adulthood and through the metaphor of ‘fettered’ imprisonment is tainted with the concept of stultification. Through association then, irrationality becomes a positive attribute that gifts a “long-forgotten freedom” to the grown man. This nostalgia offered by a regression to an infantile state through laughter asserts, as Clementine Beauvais states in *The Mighty Child* (2015), “all the possibilities which childhood offers” (p. 34). The figure of the child is powerfully free, and yet paradoxically the pre-rational state of laughter that Kris builds constructs the child as free yet unthinking. Such a connection of children, laughter and childhood is of course exactly the role attributed to the juvenile figure in many Romantic constructions of childhood. Thus in this review, the author merges a Romantic impression of innocence, tumbling “unconsciously backwards” into a happy place, with the vocabulary of the amiable humorist: “delightful”, juvenile folly”, illustrating the inherent interconnectedness of both themes. However, in the denial of rationality that Kris posits for this state of nostalgia, the coexistent insistence on reason in Enlightenment discourse is undermined. The seemingly simple surface of pantomime laughter belies a host of complex interactions regarding humour and the figure of the child.

These complexities are further nuanced by the fact that modern commentators frequently make the assertion that the humour contained within the pantomimic mode is often quite the opposite of the “happy valley of juvenile folly” that this reviewer suggests. Indeed, in Andrew McConnell Scott’s *Pantomime Life of Joseph Grimaldi*

(2010), for example, the author explicitly negates a juvenile audience for the pantomime due to “its bawdy, energetic humour, as explicit and visceral as a Gillray or Rowlandson cartoon” and which was, according to Scott “primarily aimed at adults” (p. 163). In linking pantomime with satirical print culture, Scott foregrounds the delight in visceral humour to be found in this medium, and also relates the Juvenalian and often highly scatological mode of these artists to the laughter of the pantomime. Such a depiction is in opposition to the vocabulary of innocence and amiability discussed above. Scott’s comments are also supported by contemporary commentators such as Alexander Chambers who writes in *The British Essayists* (1823) that he “often blushed to see this impudent rake (Harlequin) endeavouring to creep up Columbine’s petticoats, and at other times patting her neck and laying his legs upon her lap” (p. 195). The comments of Scott and Chambers thus position pantomime laughter, particularly through the role of that “impudent rake”, the Clown, in a similar realm of physical and crude comedy to that which I have discussed in relation to Punch. Indeed, the two characters have much in common, deriving as they do from the mode of the Italian ‘Commedia del’Arte’. In this era, the actor Joseph Grimaldi is particularly associated with the figure of the pantomime clown and became something of a celebrity within the mania for theatrical culture. Grimaldi was also responsible for turning the character of the Clown from the naïve fool of the eighteenth-century pantomime to the agentive, subversive and satiric character that delighted nineteenth-century audiences. Dressed in his baggy costume that concealed many pockets in which to hide the spoils of his larceny and with his face rouged and painted, Grimaldi was a ludicrous and extravagant sight perfectly suited to the spectacular of the pantomime (Fig. 5.9)



Fig. 5.9. Dyer. 'Mr Grimaldi as Clown'. c.1820.

Grimaldi as Clown came to the fore in the Harlequinade sequence that formed a formulaic part of every pantomime in this era. Here the frame fairy story is relinquished and the principal characters are transformed into Harlequin and Columbine and pursued in a comic and formulaic chase sequence by Clown and Pantaloon (formerly the principal antagonists). This section of the entertainment does not take place against a fairy or exotic backdrop; instead often-familiar London scenes were used to derive satiric humour. Well-known shops and other business made frequent appearances in the visual images of the stage scenery, (providing theatre directors with ample commercial opportunities), and famous London landmarks were integrated into the comic action. Melynda Nuss describes some of the these topics of satire in *Distance, Theatre, and the Public Voice* (2012):

London fads like coach driving (*Fashion's Fools* 1809), dandyism (*Harlequin and Fancy* 1815), and military fashion (*Harlequin and the Red Dwarf* 1812), and even everyday events like an audience leaving a theatre in a rainstorm and fighting over umbrellas (*Harlequin and Little Red Riding Hood* 1828) all appeared in the harlequinade section of the pantomime and heightened the effect of an exotic, theatrical world giving way to the foibles of ordinary London, (p. 18)

Such satiric treatment of topical events and fashions are of course also part of the humour to be found in children's books. The majority of the papillonnades, for example, satirise the vanity of dress and display just as *Harlequin and Red Dwarf* pokes fun at the extravagant dress of the Hussars, whilst the topical references to the Zoological gardens to be found in *Harlequin and Guy Fawkes* echo this site as both a locus for topsy-turvy entertainment (Thomas Hood's 'Ode to N. A Vigors' *Comic Annual* 1832) and Mrs Markham's pedagogic description in Thomas Crofton Croker's *Christmas Box* (1829). Nuss' description of the topics of satiric intent of the harlequinade certainly does not preclude understanding from a child audience and David Mayer's description of the satiric agenda of pantomime performance in *Harlequin in His Element* (1970) draws a rather less focused target for satire than Scott's description may suggest. He states that the Harlequinade's structure, "enabled fleeting comedy or satire to be directed at many topics without requiring that they be shown in a logical or plausible sequence. It was more effectual by being random rather than precise. A few laughs on one topic and the action of the pantomime moved to another subject" (p. 6). In this respect the satire of the pantomime sequences was designed to appear to its eclectic audience, rich and poor, male and female, old and young.

The figure of Grimaldi's clown had what Jane Moody terms, in an echo of Chambers, a "bewitching impudence" that "converted 'moral delinquency' into a form of hedonism, substituting for moral judgment an 'irresistible' compulsive pleasure on the part of the spectator" (2007, p. 215). Grimaldi's pantomimic humour then was far from the sanctified and safe carnival of the Christmas annuals, instead his brand of comedy was much akin to that of Punch; the character revelled in law-breaking, violence and defiance of authority. As Moody suggests, Grimaldi's clown

had no moral code and so it is particularly interesting that the reviewer in *The Times* should assign pantomime a moralistic role in uniting the family and anchoring the status quo through what seems, (rather paradoxically) to be an anti-authoritarian mode of humour. Furthermore, it also appears that for children as well as adults, Grimaldi held an irresistible charm. When he announced his retirement from the stage, an article in the *New Monthly Magazine* (1837) bemoaned the actor's loss to the stage and reminisced about the role of the clown in his own boyhood. The 'author-as-boy' describes how he wanted Clown to evade capture during the harlequinade sequence when Grimaldi runs amok stealing and causing chaos: the author writes "'he'll be found out!'", and so "we clasped our tiny hands till the nails cut into the palms [until at last] he's safe, and away goes the monstrous booty into that leviathan pocket of his" (p. 376). The author goes on to tell the reader that, "we loved him, yearned for him, wanted to share in his doings" (p. 376). He even seems to resemble the child: "he had things in common with us from the frill round his neck even to the subligaculi without braces, but buttoned on to the jacket like our own. We never believed that Grimaldi was a man." There is here a high degree of identification between the child and the figure of Clown, both in terms of dress and in terms of the desire of the child to "share in his doings"; that is to say to be able to disregard authority and gain freedom from the prevailing moral code. Anne Ubersfeld talks of this as a kind of pleasure in transgression: "seeing someone else do and get what I can only dream of doing and getting" is at the heart of the "pleasure and frustration of stage representation". She continues:

[when] the young mock the old, young women achieve happiness, the weak outwit the strong; all that is impossible and has existed only as a (conscious and/or unconscious) dream is at last given material existence [...] We witness the triumph of the pleasure principle over the reality principle" (1982, p. 135).

Thus, in a similar vein to the description in *The New Monthly*, the child in this depiction delights vicariously in the clown's larceny and slapstick antics precisely because they are themselves not allowed to transgress in this way. It is similar to the "secret source of pleasure" that Dickens reads into the enjoyment of Punch and Judy.

This kinship between clown and child revolves around the clown figure possessing what McConnell Scott calls "pre-adolescent desire" (2010, p. 119). He goes on to describe the character as full of "manic energy", wearing "school boy clothes" and with an "insatiable appetite for sausages and larcenous will" (p. 119). The very figure at the centre of the pantomime is imbued with characteristics that embody the medieval carnival by playing to the bodily appetites and pre-rational tendencies of the child. The young audience is likely to identify with the clown as sharing familiar child-like qualities. Such an association is also figured strongly in reviews of pantomime where the bodily humour and the lack of spoken words is often cited as a reason that this mode is only fit for juvenile and/or lower class consumption. For example, a review in *The Times* in 1807 of *Harlequin and the Ogre; or, Little Tom Thumb* played at Covent Garden over the Christmas period decries the pantomime as unsuitable for "rational beings" (p. 2) The review states:

If the taste of the public is so lowered and perverted so as to submit to derive a considerable portion of its theatrical entertainment from the stories which amuse infancy and enliven the nursery, those whose duty it is to provide them, should at least select the best, tell them intelligibly, and contrive to squeeze out something of a moral from them. (p. 2)

Such commentary reinforces the concept of the pantomime as 'low brow', as a comic amusement that only children could appreciate, yet paradoxically it also foregrounds a lack of morality and a lack of rationality in this humour that, in line with conservative ideology, should be, by association, entirely unsuitable for such an audience.

The humour of the pantomime then, with its bodily impulses, its violence and

immorality is explicitly pitched as an 'irrational' laughter that does not appeal to the intellect, but stems from Bakhtin's concept of the visceral, all consuming, all-encompassing laughter of carnival. Such a depiction is in line with what Schopenhauer in *The Word as Will and Representation* (1818) describes as "bitter laughter" (1966, vol. II, p. 99); humour that admits constantly to the inadequacy of reason because laughter is evoked from reactions that defeat the notion of rational order. It is a negative reaction to laughter that negates Bakhtin's concept of the free play and pleasure of the carnival because it is constantly pitched against that which should be 'better' in a post Enlightenment society: the reason and the intellect. And yet what these sentiments erase is the theatricality of humour in the pantomimic mode. Just as in the Punch and Judy street entertainment when the violence is turned into comedy through the hyperbolic foregrounding of the artifice of the performative mode, so as Jane Moody suggests the anarchic, irrational world of the pantomime is enjoyable precisely because it "inhabit[s] an imaginary space outside ordinary human morality" (2007, p. 215). Indeed, in one of his frequent engagements with the pantomimic mode in the periodical press, Leigh Hunt foregrounds how the audience stands outside of the action of the show and asserts "delightful" moral superiority over the figure of the Clown:

The Clown is a delightful fellow to tickle our self-love with. We feel a lofty advantage over him, so he occasionally aspires to our level by a sort of glimmering cunning and jocoseness, of which he thinks so prodigiously himself as to give us still more delightful notion of our superiority (qtd. in Nuss, 2012, p. 19)

Hunt's Hobbesian response to the figure of the Clown advocates a position where even the child, (who has identified so freely with this character in the description above) is also and at the same time outside of the frame of the action because part of the delight in the humour of the harlequinade is in knowing that the clown's actions

transgress acceptable moral behaviour. In this way the child is rationally internalizing his own moral position vis-à-vis the humour on stage and at the same time undermining Schopenhauer's pessimism regarding the ultimate defeat of reason by irrational humour. Hunt's comment operates in a similar way to Moody's observation that such laughter is permissible because it is outside of reason (rather than directly opposed to it). By foregrounding its own theatricality through spectacular effects and ludicrous sequences, the pantomime action allows the spectator to view it at a critical distance in order to derive both pleasure and (moral) power over the Clown and thus carnivalesque body. For the child however, particularly for the adult-as-child cited in the *New Monthly's* article on Grimaldi above, there is a much greater association with, rather than a distance from the figure of the clown. This could be said to reflect the status of the child in Enlightenment discourse as an emerging rational being, one who is not yet fully formed and for whom the vicarious playing out of power over other characters and over authority is a particularly compelling proposition - there is an unstable homology between the pantomime and the development of the child.

This ambiguous relationship between the child and pantomime entertainments is also illustrated in Mary Howitt's *The Children's Year* (1847), in which the author chronicles this year through the eyes of her youngest two children, Meggy and Herbert. Howitt states in her introduction that "everything which it contains is strictly true" (p. 1), although of course the very nature of literary composition necessitates some aspect of constructedness. Although Howitt's account thus cannot necessarily be ascribed total veracity, the very fact that juvenile theater-going and the pantomime assumes such centrality in this text is further evidence of the importance of the dramatic mode to children and children's literature. During the year described by the author, the family decide to take the children to a pantomime. The children choose to see *Harlequin Gulliver*, a pantomime loosely based around Swift's satiric work

Gulliver's Travels and which had first been incorporated into this mode in 1818⁶⁹.

The children are captivated by the “fun and drollery” (p. 255) of the action, but at the end of the play the children differ in their reactions to the pantomime:

There was, however, a considerable difference of opinion between Meggy and Herbert on this part of the performance [the harlequinade]. Meggy was greatly dissatisfied with the conduct of the clown and pantaloone; she thought it in so many cases unprincipled and dishonest. They were funny fellows, she said, very funny. but she did not like them; they told all kinds of falsehoods, and it made her feel uncomfortable; she was sorry, she said that they should do so. Herbert argued that it was all fun and nonsense, and make believe, and that nobody really had pockets big enough to carry off sheets and blankets, and nobody could in reality, make a ladder up which a man was mounting, run down in to the ground, make a grocer's shop, at the moment a man was going to enter it, change into a wine merchant's, and if they did run away with other people's things, it was all for fun; and as to the ugly faces they made, they were all fun too, and Meggy should not be so particular. (1847, p. 255)

As I have already discussed in the Christmas annuals, Howitt was a great supporter of folk culture (songs and ballads in particular), and frequently used humour in her work to appeal to her child audience. The reaction of her two children to the humorous world of the pantomime in *The Children's Year* exemplifies the conflicting views regarding the pantomimic mode that I have discussed. Meggy is upset by the lack of morality in the scenes, and begs for the inclusion of the same moral code that the reviewer in *The Times* also desires, whereas Herbert emphasises the unreality of the production at the same time as his extended description evokes the enjoyment of seeing such extravagant tricks. Herbert illustrates a simultaneous ability to be both within and also to step outside the frame of the performance. In other words, he is able rationally to enjoy irrational humour due to its theatrical frame. Whether or not Howitt's text actually reflects audience response, or is simply a literary device to

⁶⁹ *Harlequin Gulliver and the Flying Islands* was first produced in 1818. Swift's *Gulliver's Travels* was also often abridged as a children's chapbooks in this era. See for example. *The Adventures of Captain Gulliver* (Ross, c.1814). Fergus (2007) indicates that similar editions of *Gulliver's Travels* were purchased by Rugby schoolboys from the Clays of Rugby in the later 1700s. These texts are thus part of the “web of affiliations” that Bolter and Grusin describe.

illustrate two sides to the same point, Herbert's reasoned reply to Meggy's comments suggests that these oppositions are not wholly irreconcilable. This concept is similar to Helmuth Plessner's views on laughter. This mid-twentieth century philosopher's work treads a middle line between Kant's reason and Schopenhauer's despair over laughter. He advocates a perspective where "laughter can still be meaningful and rational even as it seems to be entirely the opposite. As he terms it in a later essay - laughter is a reaction "gone astray in a meaningful way" (qtd. in Prusak, 2006, p.59)

Meggy's objections to the pantomime, in line with the columnist in *The Times*, revolves around the lack of moral code in the Clown's performance. Meggy is unsettled by a behaviour that contravenes all that she has been taught and which is moreover, tacitly vindicated and applauded through humour. In addition, she is also disturbed by the "ugly faces" that the characters of the harlequinade make as they perform this set piece. She states that she "was very much afraid that she should dream [of them]" (p. 255). Meggy's comment here refers to another integral part of the humour of the harlequinade - the comic grotesque. Although the performance of *Harlequin Gulliver* that the children saw would not have featured Joseph Grimaldi (he retired in 1825) this figure was so influential in the role of the Clown that his portrayal undoubtedly influenced subsequent actors. Grimaldi's performance was usually sustained by all manner of elements that drew on the grotesqueries of the medieval carnival. Hyperbolic facial gestures and exaggerated bodily features were amongst the most notable and for Bakhtin the most important: "of all the features of the human face, the nose and mouth play the most important part in the grotesque image of the body; the head, ears and nose also acquire a grotesque character when they adopt the animal form or that of inanimate objects." (Bakhtin, 1965, p. 316). Indeed, Thomas Hood's poem written on the retirement of Joseph Grimaldi from the stage echoes precisely these elements in the Clown's performances:

Ah, where is now thy rolling head!
 Thy winking, reeling, *drunken* eyes,
 (As old Catullus would have said,) —
 Thy oven-mouth, that swallow'd pies —
 Enormous hunger — monstrous drowth! —
 Thy pockets greedy as thy mouth!
 Ah, where thy ears, so often cuff'd! -
 Thy funny, flapping, filching hands! —
 Thy partridge body, always stuff'd
 With waifs, and strays, and contrabands!— (p. 62)

For Meggie the gurning “oven mouth” and the rolling eyes and the contorted hands do not evoke the mirth that they do for her brother or that makes Grimaldi “the Christmas child[‘s]” “broadest friend and best” in Hood’s poem. Meggie’s reaction is indicative of the subjective nature of humour and also the liminal position that grotesque humour often occupies between laughter and disgust. This is a theme summarised by Philip Thomson in reference to Wolfgang Kayser’s *The Grottesque in Art and Literature* (1966) where he states the ability and (in his view necessity) of the grotesque to occupy this borderline status: ‘[t]he grotesque is the expression of the estranged or alienated world, i.e. the familiar world is seen from a perspective which suddenly renders it strange (and, presumably, this strangeness may be either comic or terrifying, or both)’ (Thomson, 1972, p. 18). The grotesque is a key element in the pantomimic satire of the harlequinade to enable the world to be rendered unfamiliar and thus evoke a fresh viewpoint. In appearing in the costume of a Hussar made up of ordinary household objects, for example in *Harlequin and Red Dwarf*, Grimaldi facilitates the audience’s ability to see this military unit’s extravagant dress style from a new perspective and thus he is able to make fun of it (Fig 5.10). Meggie however, sees only the unsettling aspects of these grotesque elements.



Fig. 5.10. [Anon.] 'Grimaldi's Bold Dragoon in the Popular Pantomime of the Red Dwarf'. n.p, c. 1812.

The opposing viewpoints of the children allies with discourse surrounding the comic grotesque in the early nineteenth century, with critics both defending the ability of this mode to allow for new perspectives, and others objecting to it because it appeared diametrically opposed to art and beauty and taste. The differences in reactions to the pantomime scene in *The Children's Year* also emphasises the complexity of the grotesque mode, particularly in its dramatic and visual forms. It is intriguing then that the subject of my next section, the toy theatre or juvenile drama, brought the comedy of pantomime in all its visceral and grotesque glory into the realm of the drawing room and remediated it into a children's plaything.

Playing with Performance: The Toy Theatre

The Toy Theatre or Juvenile Drama as it is often termed, was a phenomenon that grew out of a commercial opportunity grasped by the print maker William West in

1808 when he commissioned an engraver to devise a set of prints based on the pantomime *Mother Goose*. West's idea came from the knowledge that his theatrical portraits of famous actors in their roles in theatre performances were best sellers in his shop. His instinct was correct and as he reported to Henry Mayhew:

[the prints] went like wildfire among the young folks. Shopkeepers came to me far and near for 'em. [...] I dare say I sold right off as many as 5,000. It was printed many times over, and every edition I know was a thousand (qtd. in Mayhew, 1985, p. 142).

Fig. 5.11 shows an example of this print with the main characters of *Mother Goose* shown in a variety of dramatic poses:



Fig. 5.11. [Anon.] 'The Characters in Mother Goose' [Juvenile Theatrical Print]. London: William West. 1811.

Within a short space of time these prints were adapted to be cut out by children and stuck on card. Scenery was printed and the play-texts themselves were published alongside the characters to enable the performance in private houses of many hundreds of works originally intended for a theatre-going audience. Pantomime was one of the most popular works, with, according to George Speaight's *Union Catalogue* (1999), over sixty works published from this dramatic form. Sheets were

sold at a price of one-penny plain and two pennies coloured. Considering that some of the later plays ran to many pages, with Skelt's *Jack Sheppard* (1839), for example, containing 65 sheets, no small cost was involved with buying and eventually performing these plays. Thus from the essentially public humour of the pantomime that drew widely from street culture, the Juvenile Drama metamorphosed into a private drawing room entertainment principally destined for middle-class children.

And yet, due to the unique genesis of the Toy Theatre, arising as it did from a commercial and economic agenda, any interest in ensuring the 'suitability' of the humour for the middle-class child is largely absent. The 'gatekeepers' of the Juvenile Dramas were not the writers, educators or editors I have described in the Christmas annuals, but rather the theatrical publishers and entrepreneurs of London.

Businessmen like West already knew that theatrical prints were hugely popular with a juvenile audience; hence the toy theatre productions simply followed a successful and commercially viable formula. This confirms that dramatic entertainments played a large part in the lives of children from all social classes, but it is also important in that the primary intention of these productions was to entertain rather than to educate or improve. As such the humour of the stage is transcribed with accurate mimetic intention, retaining a representation of the physicality of stage humour. In this regard, Speaight comments generally on the juvenile dramas that "[...] although the censor's ban zealously barred the least suggestion of immorality from the stage, such plays as Garrick's *Cymon*, or *The Libertine*, which was an adaptation of Don Juan, both published by West, can hardly have been considered suitable for children" (1969, p. 97)⁷⁰. Here Speaight is evidently making a value judgement on the suitability of

⁷⁰ Note censorship only operated for productions in the Patent theatres. For illegitimate theatres the productions did not have to be submitted to the censor and in the case of pantomime most of the humour is not spoken but rather visual in order to mitigate this difficulty

humour and content for a child audience from a twenty-first century perspective.

However, it does seem to be the case that the plays published for the Toy Theatre were essentially a reflection of a general cross section of the repertoire of the London stage, including the portfolio of the illegitimate theatres, rather than a choice of which plays might be of interest or be 'suitable' for a child audience. In this way the visceral humour of the pantomime does not appear to have experienced the type of mediation that I identified in the children's chapbook.

Indeed, there is much evidence to suggest that the juvenile dramas were carefully translated visually and verbally from the original. From the comic chases and dramatic poses to the spectacular stage trickery, West and other publishers hired writers to attend performances and transcribe the text word for word and to write down scene changes, magic tricks, songs and dance routines. Artists were employed to sit in the theatre at the first performance in order to render in miniature the costumes and the scenery. As Speaight states: "[e]ven when the plays were intended for no other purpose than to be cut up by children they still remained excellent reproductions of the contemporary theatre" (1969, p.51). Figs. 5.12 & 5.13 for example, show a rendition of Grimaldi's performance in *Harlequin and the Swans* (1817) in a scene when he constructs a horse from household objects and corresponding iteration in William West's juvenile drama. The details are very similar in terms of the objects used and the position of Grimaldi as Clown astride the beer-barrel 'horse' with a bowl for a hat and brandishing a sword. The use of 'found' objects to 'create' this creature compounds an impression of nursery make-believe play with the hybrid constructions of the comic grotesque and thus further identifies the figure of the clown with the figure of the child. The essential impermanence of the dramatic act on stage in this era finds a permanent visual manifestation in these toy theatre character sheets that translate the action of the stage in an essentially accurate

manner.



Fig. 5.12. [Anon.] 'Harlequin & the Swans; or The Bath of Beauty'. n.p., 1813.



Fig. 5.13. [Anon.] 'Clown on his Charger' [Juvenile Theatrical Print]. *Harlequin & The Swans*. London: William West, 1817, p. 15.

Also faithfully depicted are some of the hyperbolic gestures, exaggerated features and foregrounding of body parts and the body itself that is a hallmark of the comic grotesque. Further Toy Theatre prints of West's *Harlequin and the Swans* display a number of such characteristics. The king, comically named as Maximo Rotundo, embodies his name through his expansive girth and is depicted with an oversized nose (Fig. 5.14). The figure of the clown is represented twice in this set, once in side profile with a false arm, and the second swallowing an oversized sword. (Figs. 5.15 & 5.16). The acts of swallowing and eating represented by these images mirrors Bakhtin's contention that the corporeal sphere (what he terms the "lower stratum") overturns the importance of the cerebral or "upper stratum" in carnivalesque humour, thus the body becomes the primary means of communication (1965, p. 309). Because of the limitations regarding the spoken word placed upon pantomime by the licensing authorities, the body becomes paramount - it was the only way to communicate with the audience and with other characters. In this way gesture and expression are in the ascendancy, and the Toy Theatre plates represent a confluence between the visceral

humour of the stage and the toys of the nursery.



Fig. 5.14. [Anon.] 'Maximo Rotundo, afterwards Pantaloon' [Juvenile Theatrical Print]. *Harlequin & The Swans*. London: William West, 1817, p. 15.

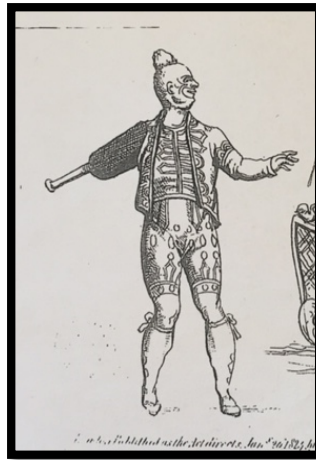


Fig. 5.15. [Anon.] 'Clown' [Juvenile Theatrical Print]. *Harlequin & The Swans*. London: William West, 1817, p. 14.

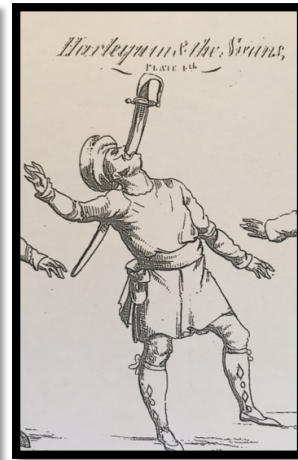


Fig. 5.16. [Anon.] 'Clown suprising the Juggler' [Juvenile Theatrical Print]. *Harlequin & The Swans*. London: William West, 1817, p. 14.

Also evident within the viscosity of these Juvenile Drama scenes, is the kind of comic juxtaposition between sizes that I have discussed in *The Eagle's Masque* in Chapter 2 and which Bakhtin emphasises as an importance part of the grotesque discourse. Alongside the large bellies and overgrown noses, often the exaggerated contrast between small and large, the giant and the midget are equally drawn into the grotesque comedy of extremes. In regard to the Toy Theatre, such an aspect also has particular resonance for the way in which this form, as itself a miniaturisation of larger than life pantomime performances, interacts with the scale of its real-life counterpart. As Bakhtin discusses, the “giants of antiquity” and the tradition of “popular-festive giants” at shows were often part of the grotesque comedy of the medieval carnival (1965, p. 343). Likewise, many of the pantomimes that took place on stage in the early nineteenth century equally drew on the exaggerated and fantastical characters of fairytale and folkloric traditions. *Harlequin and the Red Dwarf* for example, which was performed at Covent Garden in 1812 and turned into a

Juvenile Drama in 1813, includes two principal oversized characters in Emperor Longheadiano and Empress Roundbellyiana. As in the naming of Maximo Rotundo, so here the titles of the protagonists contain reference to the exaggerated size of the body and this aspect is then reflected in their physical encapsulation in print (Fig. 5.17).



Fig. 5.17. [Anon] 'Empress Roundbellyiana (afterwards Clown)' [Juvenile Theatrical Print]. *Harlequin and the Red Dwarf*. London: William West, 1813.

In the original stage pantomime Grimaldi played the part of the Empress, and her features, as well as hyperbolic in nature, are masculinised with the wide bridge nosed and 'gurning', "oven-mouth" of Grimaldi that Thomas Hood describes. This "grotesque face" as Bakhtin terms it, becomes simply a "frame encasing [the] wide-open bodily abyss" of the "gaping mouth" (1965, p. 317). In a similarly grotesque manner. Empress Roundbellio is represented in the plates of the Juvenile Drama as gigantic in size when compared to the other characters alongside. In the stage production the actors for these characters wore large papier mâché heads reminiscent of the medieval carnival, to assign the simultaneous ideas of power and the grotesque body to the characters of the Emperor and Empress. Likewise, other pantomimes such

as *Harlequin and Tom Thumb* (1853) play with scales of height and size, whilst in the original *Harlequin Gulliver*, the very pantomime that provoked such differing reactions in *The Children's Year*, the frame story of course features discrepancies in size between the Lilliputians and the Brobdingnagians. In the 1817 pantomime production this was given additional emphasis with the giants being depicted through actors wearing gigantic costumes. Cruikshank's image in Dickens' *Memoirs of Joseph Grimaldi* depicts a backstage scene between the actor and these 'giant' characters and illustrates the vast size discrepancy between these figures, a factor also represented in the plates of the juvenile drama published by William West in February 1818 (Figs. 5.18 & 5.19).

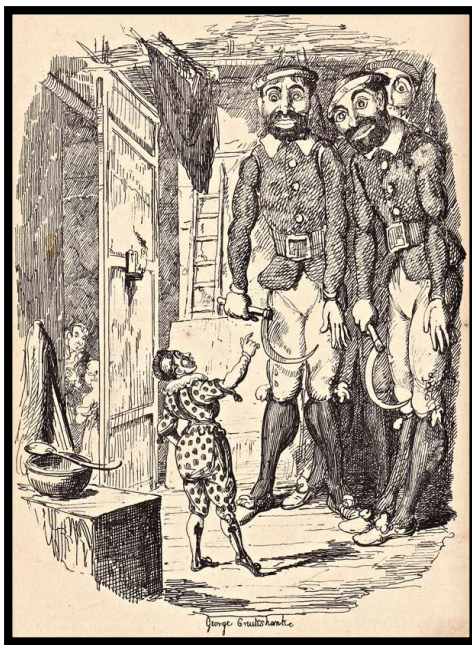


Fig. 5.18. Cruikshank, George. 'Grimaldi's Kindness to the Giants'. *Memoirs of Joseph Grimaldi*. Ed. Charles Dickens. 1838, facing title page.



Fig. 5.19. [Anon.] 'King of Lilliput and Clown' [Juvenile Theatrical Print]. *Harlequin Gulliver*. London: William West, 1818, p. 12.

And yet, despite the remarkably accurate depictions of the stage performances within the plates of the Toy Theatre prints, another way of reading these visual texts is as a

negation of the excesses of carnivalesque, grotesque humour through their physical reduction in size and their placement into the domestic environment of the drawing room. In *Distance, Theatre and the Public Voice*, Melynda Nuss discusses the way in which pantomime plays with scale, particularly the gigantic in contrast with the miniature. She asserts that this becomes a way in which to extend “bodily scale into the world of abstraction” (p. 21), and in this manner has particular ramifications for art. Her hypothesis is that the miniature is something which often represents ‘domesticised’ art “a dollhouse, a book — [...] often a thing created precisely to give its viewers a sense of ‘owning’ the world”, whereas the gigantic is its opposite, representing as in carnival humour, “a creature of appetite, of consumption, of production, of labor” (p. 21). Nuss’ characterisation is useful in regard to the juvenile theatre in that this mode is of course a ‘miniaturisation’ of the vast world of stage drama, in the sense that it is a microcosm of the output of the theatres at a point in time, and also because it brings the public and expansive world of the stage into the enclosed domestic sphere; it is the “closed, secret, interior life” of the drawing room that Nuss describes (p. 21). In scholarship surrounding miniature literature for children, it is often argued that the reader obtains a sense of power from being physically bigger than the subject of the text (usually a power hierarchy possessed by the adult over the child)⁷¹. Thus, even the gigantic figures of the theatre, those that represent the largest excesses of pantomime, and by association carnivalistic hyperbole, are reduced in the Toy Theatre to the small scale. The physical reincarnation of the stage productions in paper and card for drawing room productions allows the (now gigantic) child to control the (miniature) actors in the action on stage and to replicate the production of the play in endless signification. Because play texts

⁷¹ See for example Hancock, 2008

of the actual performances were not presented with the Juvenile Drama until 1822 the child could, in theory, use their characters in whatever way they pleased. Despite the mimetic qualities of these visual texts/toys in terms of the carnivalesque mode of humour depicted, the position of the child as controller of the action rather than observer of it takes another step in mitigating the pre-rational and potentially anxiety-generating impulses of this mode of humour through the physical enactment of the show in a domestic setting.

This potential nullification of carnivalesque humour in the remediation of pantomime in the drawing room can also apply to the work required to use the Toy Theatres to their full potential. The playtexts of the Juvenile Dramas after 1822 were incredibly detailed, with stage directions and instructions for the physical production of the play on the toy stage prevalent in the text. Following these directions exactly would require as Speaight states “a great deal of rehearsal” (1969, p. 106) and in fact mirrors the effort required to stage the original production in the theatre. Such industry comes of course after the initial activity of cutting out the characters and scenes, colouring them and sticking them to card has been undertaken. All in all, the effort required to produce these plays was tremendous and is in direct contrast to the immediacy of the humour of the pantomime on stage. One particular account of such an undertaking quoted in George Speaight’s *History of the English Toy Theatre*, and which also seems to relate to a performance of *Harlequin Gulliver* reveals just such an issue:

The actual performance was not a very brilliant affair, the only persons really amused being the manager and his assistants, if he had any, so that yawns were frequent among the audience long before the final descent of the curtain. The dialogue read in a schoolboy voice became lamentably dull as the piece proceeded, and to fancy that it was uttered by those flat Lilliputians who glided over the stage was beyond the power of the most unbridled imagination” (qtd in Speight 1969, p. 105-6).

Here, instead of the power of the carnivalesque vested upon the domestic space, exactly the opposite is true: the dialogue is “dull”; it is impossible to recreate the fun of the original play; the child audience leaves yawning rather than delighted, despite the best efforts of the juvenile performers. The wild and extravagant pantomimic excesses of the stage versions of these plays cannot, in this instance, be recaptured in a miniature, domestic setting.

Indeed, the whole activity involved in staging one of these plays could be seen to mark a move towards viewing the toy theatre as an example of a ‘useful’ yet entertaining activity for the child. In an echo of the prefaces to the Christmas annuals that often highlight the way in which the texts are useful in filling the long space of the holidays with a worthy pastime, so, Oxenford notes that: “one of the great advantages pertaining to the Toy Theatre was the quantity of time that it occupied” (qtd in Speaight, 1969, p. 121). He goes on to assert that “a boy with his bare wooden stage yet unprovided with proscenium or curtain, with his sheets of scenery and characters yet uncoloured, was supplied with ample employment for all the spare hours of his winter holidays” (pp. 121-2). The Juvenile Drama becomes, then as Speaight comments, a static “creative art” rather than a dynamic dramatic performance (p. 102)

Such a reading highlights how the dramatic mode is a site of conflicting and ever-changing appropriation and remediation in regard to the child. The Toy Theatre as a production that straddles the gap between performance, text and toy and which initially emerged as a commercial proposition, can be read as both an example of the rare introduction of carnivalesque humour into the middle-class home, and also as an accessory to the industrious occupation of the child. Here, within the Juvenile Dramas, rational and pedagogic ideologies and the Romantic desire to preserve comic

culture as an antidote to Utilitarianism compete with the exigencies of the market economy and the figure of the child as consumer.

‘I hope I don’t intrude’: Paul Pry, children’s literature and popular culture

More evidence that children were extensively engaged with comic dramatic culture comes in the dialogic relationship between print, drama and popular entertainments. In this era, just as we find today, written literary texts are frequently dramatised, whilst, conversely, texts written as works to be performed in the theatre often generate ‘spin-off’ literature and other items of print culture. I have already discussed how Jonathan Swift’s *Gulliver’s Travels*, along with numerous folk and fairy tales were reimagined in the pantomimic mode, whilst other literary works such as Pierce Egan’s *Life in London* (1821) was such a phenomenon in this era that it became the stimulus for plays, satirical prints and a juvenile drama. Scholarship by Gross (1981) has suggested that one strand of the inspiration behind the monster figure in Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein* was the comic sequence in the pantomime *Harlequin Asmodeus* where Grimaldi creates a ‘vegetable man’ from the contents of a green-grocers’ shop (pp. 403-4), whilst the same clown’s comic song ‘Hot Codlins’ performed in 1818 takes its inspiration from the cries of the street vendors of the city and became so famous that it was deeply inscribed in popular culture. The next section of my analysis however, centres upon another theatrical work that was remediated into varied popular forms, and into several books for children – the now long-forgotten comic farce about an inquisitive busybody named Paul Pry.

George MacFarren’s burletta *Paul Pry* played at the Coburg theatre in London

in June 1819, with a sequel following in September. Several years later in 1825 the dramatist John Poole staged a play named *Paul Pry: A Comedy in Three Acts* at the Haymarket theatre. According to Frederick Burwick in his exploration of popular theatre. *Playing to the Crowd* (2011), Poole drew on MacFarren's work to write what proved to be a phenomenal theatrical success (pp. 202-3). Unlike the use of comic grotesque and satire in the pantomime or the excessive violent humour of Punch, the comedy in *Paul Pry* revolves around farce, and incorporates catchphrases and set pieces that quickly became iconic both for adults and children. The humour of Pry is thus an important catalyst for remediation in this era and as such illustrates a further important connection between comedy, drama and the child in this period.

The character of Paul Pry is a busybody who asks excessive questions of everyone he meets and who insists upon knowing everyone else's business by eavesdropping and spying. Pry's constant presence, which is visually unobserved by the other characters but to which the audience is privy, allows for laughter to occur in the gap that this comic irony creates. In Poole's play (an addition from that of MacFarren) Pry carries a large umbrella that he frequently leaves behind in order that he might return to gather more information about other unsuspecting characters, thus this prop becomes an integral part of the character. The famous actor Charles Liston played the part of Paul Pry in the drama, and his costume of striped trousers, tailcoat, top hat and umbrella quickly became iconic. Liston's character was the subject of theatrical prints (Fig. 5.20) and was replicated in souvenirs such as china figures as well as used in popular print culture in advertising and promotions. In his discussion of *Paul Pry*, David Vincent (2015) outlines the main character's afterlife in diverse objects such as the names of ships and racehorses, flowers, pubs and dogs, snuffboxes, handkerchiefs and pottery. As he states: "Pry's image found its way onto an extensive variety of marketable objects" (p. 77). Pry's famous catchphrase, the

ironic ‘I hope I don’t intrude’, was also often utilised alongside the character of Pry himself in these commercial appropriations. As I shall describe, the catchphrase, the character and his accoutrements were not only inseparable, but also integral to the comedy.



Fig. 5.20. [Anon.] ‘Charles Liston as Paul Pry’ [Theatrical Plate]. London: B Webster, 1825.

As likely audience members at the theatre, many children would have some familiarity with the character of Paul Pry in his stage role, however the appropriation of this figure into popular and commercial culture would have further widened their awareness of him. Indeed, several children’s books also utilised the character of Paul Pry within their pages. For example, *Paul Pry at a Party* (c. 1825) is attributed by the scholars at the Hockliffe Collection to John Harris’ children’s book series ‘Cabinet of Amusement and Instruction’, although the title does not appear in Moon (1976)⁷². In this work, Paul Pry gatecrashes a children’s party and stays to experience the music, dancing, food and party games. Just as in Poole’s play, Pry takes advantage of any given situation - in this case a gate left open - in order to arrive uninvited and partake

⁷²The Morgan Library attributes this work to Edward Wallis. The Cotsen collection at Princeton library has this work bound in with eight other “children’s chapbooks” published by D. Carvalho, J.Harris, W. Darton, or A.K. Newman.

of the proceedings. The verse of the first page inscribes all Pry's stage catch phrases and mannerisms within the text:

Well, little Gents, pray how d'ye do?
And little Ladies how are you?
I fear you'll think me rude.
But having heard your merry din –
The gate not shut - I just popp'd in; -
I hope I don't intrude, (p. 1)

Pry then proceeds to create havoc at the party, much to the bewilderment of the other guests. The images of Pry retain the symbols of the character so widespread during this period - we see his top hat and tailcoat and of course the famous umbrella that in the final scene he leaves behind and then returns for one last look at the party. The book follows the farcical humour of the play with Pry both abused by the other characters and unwittingly causing harm to them by his insistent presence. For example, during the game of 'Blind Man's Buff' a child pokes him with his own (ever-present) umbrella, which in turn causes him to upset the table of drinks, whilst Pry's clumsy dancing results in him stepping on the toe of Miss Prim causing her to faint. In the original stage performance. Pry is struck with a hot poker as he hides behind a chimney screen as well as stabbed as he peers through a curtain, and he is constantly surprising and scaring other characters as he lurks behind furniture to eavesdrop. The children's book thus textualises the farce that is a hallmark of Pry.

A further marker of the stage comedy that is reinscribed into *Paul Pry at a Party* is the character's catchphrases. As Louise Peacock states in *Comedy and Pain* (2014), these sayings aid the recognition on the part of the audience of the comic mode, thus ensuring that the audience views the play within a humorous frame of reference (p. 67). Pry's particular catchphrase, "I hope I don't intrude" works around dramatic irony in that Pry is of course constantly intruding on the lives of the other

characters. He constantly breaks social codes of proximity and inquisitiveness and the exasperation he provokes amongst his on-stage protagonists, provokes a level of identification between these characters and the audience because they can imagine themselves in the same situation. As a review of the play in *The Morning Post* suggests, the character is funny precisely because he is a recognisable figure: “every village can produce a Pry” (qtd in Vincent, p. 17). The text of *Paul Pry at Party* is thus entirely reliant on the stage play, and the knowledge of its audience is vital to an understanding of the humour. Indeed, what happens to the interpretation of comedy when the play is divorced from its context is evident in the Hockcliffe’s introduction to the book on the website of their digital collection

In the introductory essay to *Paul Pry at a Party*, no mention is made of the theatrical context of Pry’s character and as such the author interprets the intrusions of this figure and the control he takes over the party as “rather curious”, and comments on the “sinister” overtones of Pry’s interaction with Miss Prim and the children at the party⁷³. Without the comic and theatrical frame of the stage play, Pry’s interactions can lose their humour and it is easy to see how this figure, who even in the illustrations physically dominates the frame, might be treated with suspicion if it were not for the fact that a contemporary audience would be reading the text with the benefit of this contextualisation and thus be party to all the signals of comedy that Louise Peacock defines. For a juvenile audience in the 1820s, however, the comic frame is not only clear, it also provides an opportunity for additional humour through the overturning of adult/child power relations. Pry’s annoying behaviour is punished by one child for example, who pokes the character with his own umbrella. Whilst enjoying his one-up-man-ship, the child is also aligned with the moral purpose of

⁷³ Book essay available at <http://hockcliffe.dmu.ac.uk/items/0569H.html>. See bibliography for full details

deserved pain that Immanuel Kant discusses in the *Critique of Practical Reason*. (1788). Here the philosopher states that when someone who, “delights in annoying and vexing peaceable people at last receives a right good beating, this is no doubt a bad thing, but everyone approves it and regards it as a good thing” (Kant qtd. in Peacock, 2014, p. 73). Consequently, the punishment of Pry becomes humorous because there is an element of deservedness to the action.

In its remediation of the iconic stage character of Pry, *Paul Pry at a Party* also underlines the centrality of economics to the children’s books market and the part that the attraction of laughter and comedy plays in this. Both Lissa Paul (2011) and Donelle Ruwe (2014) make the point that the commercial aspect of the children’s book business is often underplayed, with reluctance on the part of critics to assign commercial rather than literary motives to the production of texts⁷⁴. Here, however, the commercial exploitation of the Pry ‘brand’ is evident and is a forerunner to the merchandising of films, books and plays that is commonplace in today’s market. In the 1820s, just as figures of folk culture such as Tom Thumb, Mother Hubbard and Old Dame Trot were used within print culture to attract a new readership, so the Paul Pry phenomenon, like that of the papillonnades, was a foolproof guarantee of popularity and sales. As such, several other children’s books in this era use this device. J. L. Marks’ *The Adventures of Paul Pry and his Young Friend in London* (c.1825) is one such example of this remediation.

This comic text relates the decision of the eponymous Paul Pry to take the son of a country friend to London to show him the sights. This text, like *Paul Pry at a Party* retains the farcical nature of the theatrical production with Pry and his young charge experiencing many mishaps, mostly caused by Pry, whilst visiting people and

⁷⁴ See for example Ruwe, 2014 for a discussion of the denial of this commercial aspect in the genesis of *Original Poems for Infant Minds* by the Taylors and O’Keefe

sightseeing. At tea with “Miss Twizzle” for example, Pry: “Trodden on the cat, / What a shocking mishap, / And the fright made him spill, / All the tea in his lap.” (p. 1) The jaunty anapests echo the humour of the scene. Likewise, Pry is trodden on by a horse, bitten by a tiger at the zoo, and struck by a firework rocket at Vauxhall gardens. What is notable about this text is that all the activities that Pry takes the young boy to see revolve around fun and pleasure - Vauxhall Gardens, a trip on the Thames, a ride in Hyde Park and even a trip to the theatre. In this latter event the two see a tragedy, Hamlet, but even here comedy is derived from the fact that Pry weeps hyperbolically at Laertes’ death: “’Tis sad cried Paul Pry / And he wept like a Noddy” (p. 4)⁷⁵. Given the perceived ascendancy of the tragic mode, (particularly for children within the overarching narrative concerning drama in this era) it is doubly amusing that tragedy should be undercut in this scene by the hyperbolic reaction of a character from a comic play. This book, like *Paul Pry at a Party*, reinscribes the familiar symbolism of Pry’s character with his striking dress into its illustrations. These images echo the mishaps and farce of the text (and the original production) and express the physicality of the visceral humour at work in the play (Fig. 5.21).



Fig. 5.21. Marks, J. L. Plate from *The Adventures of Paul Pry and His Young Friend in London*. London: J. L. Marks, c.1825, facing p.7.



Fig. 5.22. Marks, J. L. Plate from *The Adventures of Paul Pry and His Young Friend in London*. London: J. L. Marks, c.1825, facing p. 8.

⁷⁵ There is no pagination in this text; therefore I have assigned sequential numbering to the plates

Again, Pry dominates the images with his young charge looking on in amused helplessness. In a comic inversion of the usual adult/child hierarchy, it is the adult who finds himself in unfortunate situations. For a child reader this overturning underscores the already humorous frame through its undermining of the infallible nature of the adult. Indeed, this comic subversion is completed at the end of the text with Pry again being punished in a Kantian sense for all his farcical behaviour and meddling. On a trip on the River Thames, Pry falls in the water (Fig. 5.22) and the accompanying text cleverly turns his famous catchphrase back towards the character:

On a Water excursion
The Boat overset
He escaped with a ducking
Quite soused dripping wet.
Cries he I'm near drowned
Says the man with a grin
You're not very much hurt
For you only dropt in. (p. 9)

Here the boatman revels in the discomfort of the character, using Pry's signature line to undercut both the character's exaggerated claim at drowning and the larger than life figure of the play. The laughter is generated by a double irony and a pun on "dropt in": Pry's intrusions are unwanted disturbances for other people yet the act of him 'dropping in' the river is for Pry himself unpleasant. The humour is physical; the act of falling mirrors the farcical humour of the stage, but the neat reversal of the catchphrase brings comic satisfaction to the reader and reinforces Pry's (deserved) punishment through higher order humour. The types of humour in this text are thus mixed and very much in a similar mode to J. L. Marks' other work, *Gammar Gurton's Visit to the Fairground* (Chapter 4). Though unpriced, Marks' text was probably sold at around 6d, however, the range of Paul Pry's cultural appropriation links audiences of all social classes together. Vincent cites anecdotal evidence of Paul

Pry themed attractions appearing as fairground entertainments in this era (p. 101), whilst a revised version of the play entitled *Paul Pry on Horseback* was performed with actors and live horses at Astley's theatre in 1826. This entertainment was subsequently remediated into the realms of the toy theatre by William West in the same year, where plates show comic scenes from the play with the madcap action encapsulated in the central figure falling from moving coaches and being embroiled in fights (Fig 5.23). Importantly, the text of Paul Pry was also adapted for amateur performance, and thus Paul Pry's very public persona also entered the private space of the drawing room. This movement from theatre to street to text, to image, to private space shows a dynamic and visceral relationship with the dramatic mode in this era that is essential to an analysis of humour and the child, and illustrates, as in the folk figure of Dame Trot, how humour can cross social class as well as modes of writing.

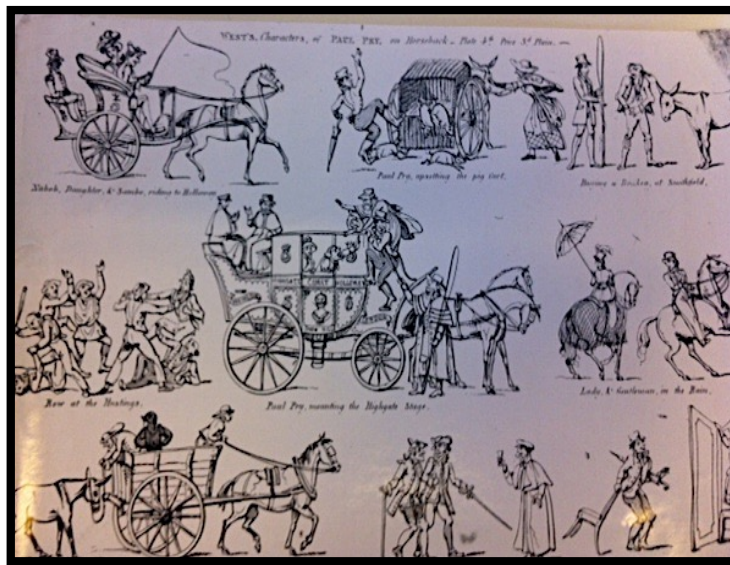


Fig. 5.23. [Anon.] 'Paul Pry on Horseback' [Juvenile Theatrical Print]. London: William West. 1826.

To conclude this chapter, my discussion now moves away from the theatre and focuses on the realm of the private performance in order to demonstrate how children were often placed at the very centre of humorous discourse in this period by their

involvement in and acting out of comic plays in the domestic sphere. In my discussion the concept of the social function of laughter involved in drama is underscored by the participation of a small circle of family or friends in these amateur dramatics who are able to share specific jokes and delight in a performance that is specifically tied to a private context.

Humour and Private Theatricals

Private theatricals were hugely popular in the second half of the eighteenth and early nineteenth century. These events ranged from impromptu drawing-room sketches to elaborate performances in large country houses that stretched the boundaries between the private and the public sphere⁷⁶. However, although many performances, such of those of the famed ‘Picnic Society’, (see Chapter 2) consisted of adult actors, many were also tied to family groups where children played an integral role in both performing and devising the production. I have already noted the involvement of Jane Austen and her inner circle in amateur theatricals, and there is also much evidence to suggest the eagerness of many other families to embrace such home entertainments. Charles Dickens, for example, famously involved his whole family and wider friends and acquaintances in dramatic performances at home and in more public spaces, and Maria Edgeworth in *The Parent’s Assistant* (1796) advocated dialogue and drama as a suitable vehicle for childhood learning, underlining the importance of drama to both childhood entertainment and education.

⁷⁶ See Russell 2007 for a description of the theatricals held at Dalby Hall in Leicestershire by Edward Hartopp in 1799 where the area’s social elite was invited through elaborate “tickets and sophisticated costumes and stage scenery were employed” (p. 192). Russell also discusses the phenomenon of newspapers carrying publicity and reports of such theatricals making these private affairs in effect, public

Private theatricals also feature strongly in literature of this period. Austen's *Mansfield Park* (1814) contains a particularly well-known example, whilst later in the century; Charlotte Brontë's *Villette* (1853) specifically involves schoolgirls in amateur performance. Indeed, *The Tyger's Theatre*, a papillonnade published by Benjamin Tabart in 1807, uses the popularity of amateur dramatics as the context for its gathering of animals: "[a]s private theatricals now are the rage, / Let's get up some new plays, and erect a new stage." (p. 14). This piece in particular illustrates the dialogic nature of the dramatic mode, with the popularity of performance influencing the context of a children's poem that is, in itself, an extended humorous theatrical text consumed with the preparations, acting and consequences of staging a play. Self-conscious references to the theatre abound within the text through allusions to Sheridan's *The Rivals* (1775), to the horses at Astley's Theatre and in a punning reference to the pantomime when the fox states that "Mother Goose nicely suited his Palate!" (p. 19). Such examples are testament to the popularity of private theatricals in this period and are particularly interesting in relation to children as although the suitability of public theatre for young people was often questioned, the private space of the drawing room was frequently viewed as a safe and even beneficial locus for performative literature, and the intrinsically interactive nature of drama became a catalyst for humorous exchange and shared pleasure.

The gathering of animals in *The Tyger's Theatre* underlines this social function for humour where the comic can unite participants. This theory is expounded by the theorist Henri Bergson in the early 1900s, when he states that laughter is amplified by the group dynamic: "[y]ou would hardly appreciate the comic if you felt yourself isolated from others. Laughter appears to stand in need of an echo" (1914, p. 5). The presence of the (extended) family group in private theatricals constitutes what

Greenhalgh calls “a new kind of theatrical ‘sociability’” (2009, p. 273). This is an element reflected in Jonathan Levy’s collection of nineteenth-century plays for children. Here the author quotes from an early American translator of the French children’s writer, Arnauld Berquin where, in the translator’s foreword, the sociability and conviviality of private performance is emphasised:

The parents, by performing a part in them, will enjoy the delightful satisfaction of participating in the gayety of their young family; and it may be considered a new band to unite them still more tenderly to each other, from an interchange of gratitude and pleasure. (qtd. in Levy, 1992, p. 6)

The dramatic performance brings about delight and “gayety” and the whole family is united with reciprocal “gratitude and pleasure” in a shared entertainment where fun and humour does not derive from superiority or incongruity, but results in unification in the participatory and dynamic nature of drama.

This use of humour in a familial setting is complicated in the case of drama however, by the interpolation of the child as reader and also as performer and audience of dramatic productions. The humour that is written within the play text itself and also generated by the act of performing the play is closely tied to the context in which the drama is enacted. In a theatrical setting the reaction of the audience to the action, their prior knowledge of the humorous frame of the text, the pleasure derived from attending the play itself can all affect and compound laughter. In the case of private theatricals, the audience becomes even more tied to the specific context, and in the case of family groups it is possible for humour to emerge as a result of shared understanding and underlying values. Stanley Fish’s concept of “interpretive communities” appearing in his 1976 essay ‘Interpreting the Variorium’ and later expanded in ‘Is There a Text in the Class?’ (1980), contends that meaning is given to a text by the varying experiences of the reader/audience and when a group of

readers is bound by similar “interpretative principles” they can tacitly agree on a general interpretation of the text (1990, p. 337). Erie Martha Roberts expands Fish’s definition of interpretive groups into what she terms a “situational interpretive community” that is a group “made up of individuals who, for one reason or another, are part of a specific situation that will influence how they think” (2006, p. 36). This is particularly pertinent to the family group where shared experiences and as in the following discussion, a shared project in acting out a play, may influence the way in which humour is interpreted and understood.

These aspects are evident in my final text, a play written by Anna Jameson (née Murphy) around 1820 and entitled *Much Coin, Much Care*. The drama was written specifically for the children of the wealthy Littleton family to whom Jameson was governess and is subtitled, “A Dramatic Proverb written for Hyacinth, Emily, Caroline and Edward”. The four parts in the play, one male and three female, correspond to the four Littleton children and the reference to the mode of the dramatic proverb ties the play into the model of the théâtre d’éducation initiated by French writers and educationists such as Madame de Genlis. This figure found the dramatic form to be the perfect “dynamic pedagogical tool for the socialisation of the young” (Brown, 2007 p. 173), producing amusing and lively plays that mixed comedy with morality, the form of which was quickly embraced and interpreted by English writers and educationalists such as Maria Edgeworth.

Jameson too followed the lead of de Genlis, aiming to present a moral lesson to her young charges, yet at the same time to keep them amused and engaged. As Jameson’s letters show, she herself enjoyed the theatre immensely and was a regular theatregoer, often taking children with her in her role as governess to several families before her marriage. “The theatre is the only amusement I care much about”, she writes in a letter to Elisa Murphy from Paris in 1821, and in another letter (November

1821) she describes a family visit to the “theatre of Marionettes” in Naples where the production was so good they “all laughed till we were tired”; “for once it is worth seeing”, she comments (qtd. in Erskine, 1915, p. 31; p. 41). It is little wonder then, given this interest in the theatre and her evident understanding and enjoyment of humorous performance, that her play should be so lively. Indeed, in presenting this drama in his collection of nineteenth-century plays for children, Jonathan Levy contrasts the laughter of the piece with what he terms, “Hannah More’s humorless moralizing” in her dramatic works for children. *Sacred Dramas*. He states:

From its deadpan title on, [Jameson’s play] is an excuse not for high seriousness but for high spirits. It gives the children who act it a chance to show off what they can do. It gives them a chance to talk French, both proper (for praise) and fractured (for fun). [...] The fact that it was written for her young charges to perform is the reason it is so good. It was precisely and specifically imagined for the occasion on which and the space in which it was going to be performed. And it was tailor-made for its young actors (1992, p. 176)

Levy’s comment is shot through with comments on laughter and the comic as it relates to drama. He categorises the play as made for “high spirits” not “high seriousness”, and considers the play amusing with its mocking of both high and low class society and generous opportunities for larger than life acting and song. Indeed, the entire play hinges upon tensions caused by performance at its simplest level – the song. The rowdy early morning singing of the cobbler Dick disturbs the delicate French lady living opposite the simple house Dick shares with his wife, Margery. When summoned to an audience with Lady Amaranthe and her maid Mademoiselle Justine, Dick’s simple honesty and joie de vivre, even in their straightened circumstances, moves Lady Amaranthe to offer him monetary recompense in the shape of five guineas in return for silencing his morning songs. This money then proceeds to drive such a wedge between the once happy Dick and Margery that they

decide to renounce it in preference for their simple life.

On the surface, the story appears to confirm Andrew O'Malley's observation that literature for middle-class children in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries inculcated middle-class ideology and representations of the working class that advocated contented, hard-working families that knew their place in society. Dick and Margery's rejection of wealth in favour of their poor-yet-happy previous situation certainly seems to conform to this agenda: "We were so happy this morning" states Dick "when we hadn't a penny to bless ourselves with, nor even a bit to eat; and now, since all this money has come to us of a sudden, why, it's all as one as if Old Nick himself were in that purse" (1829, pp. 220-1)⁷⁷. However, Jameson's use of humour in the drama complicates this seemingly straightforward moral and asks its audience to think more deeply about the interactions of different social classes. As I shall show, in this way the play contravenes the usual black and white morality of the dramatic proverb form, offering instead a more nuanced reading of class relations.

The play opens with Dick loudly singing the popular ballad 'The Bay of Biscay'. This provides an opportunity for an entertaining start to the drama, and from the outset identifies the lower-class cobbler and his wife with popular and folk culture. There is thus an immediate ironic juxtaposition between the working class and the higher-class characters in the play and this is further compounded by the fact that the play is written to be performed with the confines of a wealthy drawing-room setting with children drawn from high society playing all the parts in the play. This twofold interpolation of low culture into high culture is further foregrounded in Margery's comment to her husband that "everyone said yesterday that you sung as well as Mr Thingumee at Sadler's Wells" (p. 196). Stated in earnest truth by Margery

⁷⁷ All references are to the text that appears in Thomas Crofton Croker's *The Christmas Box* 1829

this line is amusing because (presumably) Dick's singing is far from that of a professional musician and also because the audience/actors of this performance would be both familiar with the reference to Sadler's Wells and in full knowledge of the incongruous comparison. Margery's seriousness in her assertion also marks her out as something of a naïf, a factor that according to Kant is characteristic of children and can also provoke laughter from those who assume more knowledge - in this case the children themselves ("We laugh at the simplicity that is as yet a stranger to dissimulation") (1911, p. 335). The comedy here thus works on several levels and is tied not only to the text but also to the performative and social context of the Littletons' environs.

The humour is also further muddled by the fact that the children performing this play are both actor and audience, in that they receive the moral message as well as embody it. For example, Edward presumably played the character of Dick, and there is the potential for a large degree of comic incongruity derived from his status as a privileged young man inhabiting the role of a poor cobbler. His sisters and governess as part of a small and specific interpretive community interacting with this play would understand this particular undercurrent to the performance. Levy, in his introduction to *Much Coin, Much Care*, reads the lower class characters in the drama as the butt of humour. He writes that Jameson's text gives the "well brought-up children a chance to talk common, act rowdy, and mock affectations they would themselves be too polite to mock" (176). Indeed, in *Comedy and Culture 1820-1900* (1980), Roger B. Henkle makes a similar comment regarding the negative portrayal of lower class characters in Pierce Egan's contemporaneous *Life in London* (1821). He states: "Egan knows his public. He knows what he is selling to whom - easy generalizations about the lower orders for the 'edification' of a middle-class audience" (p. 42). It could be argued that similarly Jameson knew her audience. She

knew that an ‘othering’ of Dick and his wife through superior humour (laughing at them) would fit well with this interpretive community. And yet amongst the potential for laughter *at* Dick and his wife, there are also instances when the rights of the working classes are expounded and the laughter is more inclusive. For example, Dick is shown standing up to the imposition of Lady Amaranthe’s butler. When the latter threatens him for “such a bawling every morning, awakening people out of their first sleep”, Dick replies “What right have you to speak in that there way to me?” and later, “I’m a free-born Englishman, and I knows the laws well enough”. Dick follows this up with a full attack on his aggressor:

I’ll sing when I please, and I’ll sing what I please, and I’ll sing as loud as I please; I will, by jingo! [...] This house is my castle; and if you don’t take yourself out of that in a jiffey, why. I’ll give your laced jacket such a dusting as it never had before in its life - I will (p. 199).

Dick’s speech is amusing in its intensity and colloquialisms, but there is also topical reference here in terms of the curbs on popular amusements by the establishment that I have discussed in connection to the fair in Chapter 4. Dick here stands as a champion of the rights of ordinary people to enjoyment and entertainment. Edward’s father as an MP who championed parliamentary reform and the rights of his working-class Nottinghamshire constituents would have been acutely aware of the contemporary debates surrounding these aspects, and this liberal standpoint may well have found its way to the Littleton children⁷⁸. However, once again Jameson brings in a note of ambiguity through the way in which this dialogue is presented. The exigencies of the play having only four characters to correspond to the four Littleton children necessitates the dialogue above to be reported speech; almost a play within a

⁷⁸ See Hansard references in bibliography for evidence of Edward Littleton’s support of workers’ rights in his constituency.

play, where Dick reports to his wife the conversation he has had with Lady Amaranthe's servant. The exchange thus becomes a piece of meta-theatre with Dick playing both characters in the dialogue. This device brings in the potential for Dick to expand his own role within the exchange for the benefit of his adoring wife. Certainly, when actually called to speak to Lady Amaranthe, Dick displays a deference that is at odds with his bombastic words to the butler. The dramatic mode thus allows a dual interpretation of Dick's words and actions depending upon how the role is realised in performance and the way in which the "interpretative community" perceives the text. The textual humour here only gives a partial view: when comedy is performed in a given time and place, meaning can be ambiguous.

Similarly, through Jameson's use of humour, the character of Lady Amaranthe herself also foregrounds a whole series of ambiguities that revolve around social class and tensions between French and English nationhood. The Littleton children studied French as part of their education and would have had some proficiency in the language, but the mock French accent textualised in the play suggests Lady Amaranthe is created as a figure of fun. Her comments, for example, that in France the insubordination and impertinence displayed by Dick in his singing would have resulted in the guillotine for him, single her out as snobbish, intolerant and anti-democratic. She states that in England the social classes are not so strictly defined and such activity is tolerated, almost encouraged. With the contemporary French context in mind, such statements serve to underline the ironic position of the French political situation which sought equality and fraternity but instead found a different sort of despotism under Napoleon. Moreover, as in *The Lion's Parliament*, it also underscores a partisan view of England as a land of tolerance. The fact that Lady Amaranthe's lifestyle and mannerisms are ridiculed pokes fun at the leisured upper classes and serves as a contrast to the industry of Dick and his wife. However, the

Lady's identity as a French woman renders a critical distance between the English upper classes, to which the child performers belong, and the behaviour of the 'frivolous French' which, as I have discussed is a common theme in this era.

These complex negotiations between social classes are brought further into focus when one considers that this play, although written for a very specific audience was also reprinted twice for popular consumption. The first time was in 1829 in a publication that I have discussed widely in Chapter 3, Thomas Crofton Croker's *The Christmas Box*, and secondly it appeared in 1834 in a collection of other works by Anna Jameson entitled *Visits and Sketches at Home and Abroad*. Levy makes no mention of these aspects of the publication history of the piece in his introduction to Jameson's play. However, the *Christmas Box* context is important because, when taken out of the auspices of the drawing room at Teddesley Hall, the work then becomes part of, and subject to, a new circle of reference. As previously established, the audience for the juvenile Christmas annuals was, like the Littletons, decidedly upper class, but the real-life actors, Hyacinth, Caroline, Emily and Edward now remain a vestige of the play, enshrined in the dedication, but no longer participating as living actors/audience. It is the turn of another set of young people to either read or act out the play during their Christmas leisure time. As such the role of Dick in the scene discussed above, becomes divorced from an interpretative context which, given the charitable and liberal nature of the Littleton family would very possibly have retained sympathy with the lower class characters in the play despite their superior social standing. Now the character and role of Dick and Lady Amaranthe is fair game for a wider audience to interpret at will. This particular piece is regularly mentioned in reviews of *The Christmas Box* as particularly amusing and was evidently valued as part of the genial and sanctified humour of this important season, but just how the comedy was directed and interpreted, and whether the laughter textualised within the

play served a conservative function of reinforcing class structures, or was ultimately more radical is, in the final account, dependent upon a specific and essentially irrecoverable personal context.

Humour for the child in the literature of performance can be, thus, an ambivalent affair. Pantomime laughter can provide wish fulfillment and power over others; it can be subversive and satirical and encompass, like street entertainments, all social classes. In this respect it can be inclusive and joyous in the mode of Bakhtin's carnival, but it can also be frightening in its grotesquerie and conservative in its direction. The child can fully participate in acting out both scripted and spontaneous humour in the drawing room and can share the 'in-jokes' of the catchphrases of popular theatrical characters in the theatres and in the streets, whilst enjoying remediated forms of drama in toys and books. Drama has at its very heart a vital ludic quality that is particularly important to the child as spectator, reader and performer. When in his inaugural lecture Michael Rosen speaks of his brother acting out some of the humorous moments of Norman Hunter's (non-dramatic) *The Incredible Adventures of Professor Branestawm* series (1933-83), he demonstrates the centrality of drama to humour and to the child and how the comic can also have specific and highly personal resonance. These pieces of "shared fun", as Rosen calls them, are as relevant to modern childhoods as they were to Rosen's own upbringing and to the lives of the many thousands of early nineteenth-century children who read, watched, listened to, acted and laughed at performed comedy in all its varied forms.

Conclusion: *Whims and Oddities*....

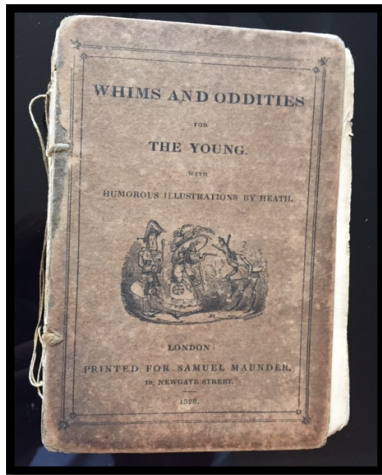


Fig. 6.1 Heath, Henry. Front cover plate from *Whims and Oddities for the Young*. London: Samuel Maunday, 1828

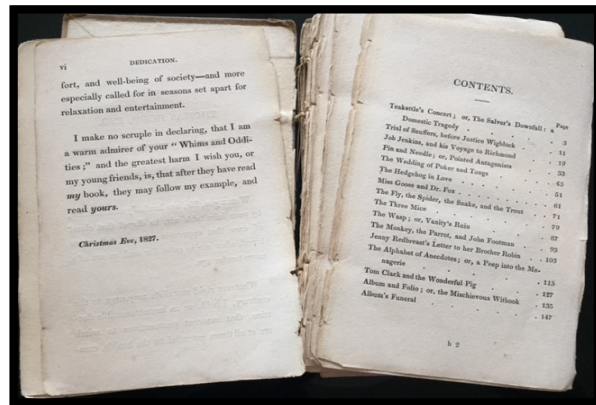


Fig. 6.2. Heath, Henry. Dedication and contents page from *Whims and Oddities for the Young*. London: Samuel Maunday, 1828.

Falling apart, yellowed with age, cover spotted with marks, *Whims and Oddities For The Young* (Figs. 6.1 & 6.2) seems just another forgotten children's book, one of the many I have discussed in the preceding pages, and one amongst many more whose stories I could not document in the limited space of my thesis. For my work is as much about the comic texts that had to be left out, as about the ones that I chose for my narrative and about the ones that are still waiting to be discovered in obscure archives and collections. As Alderson and de Marez Oyens hint, and as I have revealed in my work, there is indeed a "great deal more humour" in early nineteenth century children's literature "than most people think" (2006, p. xii). Indeed, a whole cast of humorous texts stand alongside my thesis in a supporting role as testament to the importance of the comic in the early nineteenth century. The existing master-discourse of the history of children's literature selects, narrativises and gives authority to an important and valid, yet limiting aspect of juvenile literature - the

instruction/amusement binary. My thesis presents a glimpse at another story where laughter is normalised, rather than shown as a “break with tradition” (Moon, 1976, p. 2), and where humorous texts form part of a “genealogy of affiliations” (Bolter and Grusin, 2002, p. 55), interacting with varied and often competing literary, social, historical and philosophical discourses. *Whims and Oddities for the Young*, a rare text published by Samuel Maunder in 1828, and one which has never been critically interrogated, has for me, come to represent this alternative history. Within its pages, different aspects, uses and functions of humour are played out through the 16 stories that make up the mini ‘archive’ of this text. It was not, it seems, a particularly successful text (there were no reprints) and at 2s. 6d plain or 4s. 6d with coloured plates and gilt edges it was very expensive - perhaps too expensive for the juvenile market. Nevertheless, its contents are well written and often ‘laugh-out-loud’ amusing, and the plates by the caricaturist Henry Heath can rival Cruikshank for both quality and humour. For this reason, the stories of this text serve as both a coda for my thesis and, importantly, illustrate a bridge between this era and future examples of humour in children’s literature.

This work is written as an homage to Thomas Hood, a poet, illustrator and periodical writer who, although now little studied or remembered, was in the early nineteenth century exceptionally popular, particularly for his comic works written in the amiable humorist mode. Although as Morag Styles states in *From The Garden to the Street* (1997), Hood’s work held much appeal for a juvenile audience (p. 43) and his Christmas *Comic Annual* was aimed at a family market, he wrote very little specifically for a juvenile audience. However, the connection with Hood is important, as this poet’s work forges a connection between humour in this early nineteenth-century period and the later work of Charles Dickens (who he knew well), the

fantastic world of Carroll's *Alice* books and particularly the grotesque hybridity and the dark humour of Edward Lear. The dedication of Maunder's text to Hood thus interpolates this work into the trajectory of children's literature and further emphasises the dialogic relationship of comic works that I have highlighted in my exegesis.

Although *Whims and Oddities for the Young*, according to its preface, aims to provide the "innocent provocatives to mirth" that are "at all times essential to the health, comfort and well-being of society" (pp. v-vi), its stories run a gamut of comic forms. In fact, the work employs a wide range of comic techniques that range from the mock-heroic to the carnivalesque, from the satiric to the comic grotesque. For example, 'The Wasp' echoes the mock-heroic form of 'Major Brown' in *The Christmas Box* and the "delicate aura of the mock epic" that Jackson identifies in Dorset's work (1989, p. 210). After extended self-aggrandisement on the part of this insect, where he lauds himself as "the *best*, the *noblest* WASP" (p. 90 original emphasis), the author employs inscrutable comic bathos to end the narrative: "Wasp threw/ His regal wing aside, / And tumbled into the mustard-pot; / Wherein, alas! He died" (p. 90). Such a humorous presentation is, of course, further extended in the parody of epic literature at the heart of Carroll's *Jabberwocky* (1872) and such texts combine to form a comic heritage of the parodic form that stretches from the *Batrachomyomachia* of the age of Homer, through Pope, Swift and Cervantes into the present time.

The story of Job Jenkins also draws from contemporaneous comic literature, owing much to William Cowper's better-known *The Diverting History of John Gilpin* (1782), whilst the disasters and mishaps that feature in the narrative foreshadow the text of *Gaffer Gurton's Visit to the Fair* by J. L Marks (as discussed in Chapter 4).

Job's social climbing wife, like John Gilpin's, proposes a trip to "Richmond by the steam" which ends in the farce of seasick children and Job falling into the Thames whilst trying to retrieve his wig that has been blown off by an "unexpected breeze" (p. 25) (Fig. 6.3). Various other mishaps add to the comic mayhem and lead Job to declare when he finally returns to his house: "Let fools, thought he, go roam; / For me there is no earthy place/ So beautiful as Home" (p. 30). The narrative forms part of the discourse of comic 'miseries' that Brian Maidment outlines as a prominent theme in both visual and textual humour for adults in this period (2013, p. 50-7) and which Thomas Hood also employed as a frequent device in his comic literature (Fig. 6.4).

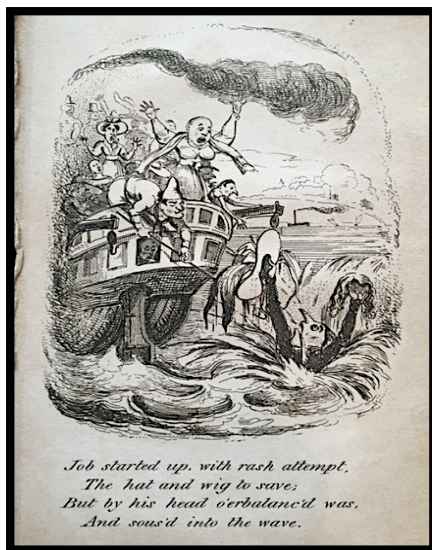


Fig. 6.3. Heath, Henry. Plate from *Whims and Oddities for the Young*. London: Samuel Maunders, 1828.



Fig. 6.4. Hood, Thomas. 'Hey-day'. From the *Comic Annual*. London: Charles Tilt, 1832. Facing p.27

In 'Album and Folio' the character of "WITBOOK" illustrates the often-contradictory attitude towards humour that I have demonstrated was ever-present in the early nineteenth century. The subtitle "the mischievous wit book" depicts this character as a "saucy knave", an "audacious elf" (pp. 136-7) who wreaks havoc on the "learned gloom" (p. 135) of a country house library. Like the Lord of Misrule in Crofton

Croker's *The Christmas Box*, humour is projected as a kind of anti-hero who comes up against establishment values of learning and decorum and literally shakes them to their foundations as his behaviour manages to knock over the bookcase causing other books to fall out and start to fight (p. 142). Witbook is the figure who takes up the cause against the “formal and cold” language of learning represented by Folio, but my discussion of Barbauld's warning against the excesses of ridicule and mischief in ‘The Misses’ (Chapter 3) is born out in the fate of Album who as a result of Witbook's actions is “crush'd” by Folio and is killed, “plates, verse and all” (p. 143). As my analysis here and elsewhere in my thesis shows, humour can create anxiety and faction as much as it can be a positive force. The Christmas annuals in particular, as I have suggested, are often quick to carve out a space for controlled humour. This is echoed in the fate of Witbook, who is relegated to the kitchen by John the servant, accusing him of having “too much Liberty by half” (p. 143) and stating punningly that he should be “*strongly bound*” (p. 144 original emphasis). The fact that *Whims and Oddities for the Young* should also be published for the Christmas market makes this support of a ‘middle ground’ for humour within this story particularly pertinent.

The influence of the papillonnade style on *Whims and Oddities for the Young* is felt in pieces such as the ‘Teakettle’s Concert’, where various household objects (“Miss Candles”, “Dandy Sugarbasin”, “Lucy Crumpet” (p. 4)) are brought to life as high society participants in a concert. “Miss Kettle, feeling quite in tune [...] sent out cards to ev’ry friend, /An evening concert to attend.” (p. 3). The story of the ‘Wedding of Poker and Tongs’ also utilises this papillonnade style, but importantly, it is also strongly suggestive of later work by Edward Lear, both in the animation of household objects - a common device in Lear’s poetry - and in the resulting comic grotesquerie of the merging of human and inanimate forms. In *Whims and Oddities*

for the Young we find the “TABLES, FENDERS, and CHAIRS” attending the wedding of Poker and Tongs. The text states that “the sweet Master FORKS with Miss KNIVES came in pairs” (p.45), and in true papillonnade style, shortly begin dancing:

POKER a fine minuet she went through.
The KNIVES, who in cutting e'en vestris excell'd
To Waltz with the tiny MISS FORKS were prevail'd
Whilst JOCKO and POLL, not deficient in skill,
Join'd the TABLES and CHAIRS in the last new quadrille, (p.46)

A similar scene is presented in Lear's poem, 'The Nutcracker and the Sugar Tongs' (1871). In a scene of wild excitement and confusion, the Nutcracker and the Tongs escape the house for their horse race. “The Cups and the Saucers dance[] madly about” whilst the “Plates and the Dishes looked out of the casement” and the “Saltcellar stood on his head with a shout” (1947, p. 75). Furthermore, the nonsensical image of the “Mustard-pot climb[ing] up the Gooseberry Pies” or the Nutcracker and the Tongs riding on horseback finds an equivalent in Maunder's text when the:

Housekeeper hear[s] what was doing upstairs,
That the TABLES were dancing the hays with the CHAIRS,
She took forth preserves from each closet and shelf.
Nicely served up in china, in glass and in delft,
To the KNIVES and the FORKS she sent each a stew'd pear.
To the TABLES some Jam - to the CHAIRS, some stuff'd Hare - (p. 47)

Moreover, the darker side to humour with the violence and death that often haunts the humour of Lear and which is hinted at the end of 'The Nutcracker and the Sugar Tongs' who “faded away. - And they never came back!” (p. 77) is also present in *Whims and Oddities for the Young*. As I have outlined, Album dies an ignominious death, but also a rabbit is held prisoner by a Hedgehog, and a “Salver” is killed by a “Candle-snuffer” in 'The Teakettle's Concert' and has to go on trial for her murder. Connected with this darker side to humour are the playful yet disturbing composite

images in *Whims and Oddities for the Young* drawn by Henry Heath. These illustrations merge the human and the non-human in a similar way to illustrations used by Thomas Hood in his work and which also echo the grotesque improvisation of Joseph Grimaldi that I discuss in Chapter 5 (Figs. 6.5, 6.6 & 6.7).



Fig. 6.5. Heath, Henry. Detail from front cover image of *Whims and Oddities for the Young*. London: Samuel Maunders, 1828.



Fig. 6.6 Hood, Thomas. 'Cinderella' From the *Comic Annual*. London: Charles Tilt, 1832.



Fig. 6.7 [Anon.] 'Grimaldi and the Monster'. *Harlequin Asmodeus*. London: R. Ackermann, 1811

This kind of hybridity speaks to the contemporary anxiety concerning scientific evolutionary models and movement between the species that is also evidenced in figures such as Carroll's "pig baby" in *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* and his "Rocking-horse-fly" in *Alice Through the Looking Glass*, or the illustrations from Edward Lear's *Nonsense Botany* (1877) (Fig. 6.8).



Fig. 6.8 Lear, Edward. 'Crabbia Horrida' from *Nonsense Botany* (1877)

Perhaps the most interesting aspect of *Whims and Oddities for the Young*, however, is the story of the ‘The Fly, The Spider, The Snake and the Trout’. This is a fascinating counterpoint to Mary Howitt's well-known story ‘The Spider and the Fly’ that appeared in the 1828 *New Year's Gift and Juvenile Souvenir* and therefore was published almost simultaneously with Maunder's text. Howitt's version is now firmly embedded in the canon of children's literature and is one of few pieces originally produced in the juvenile Christmas annuals to survive into the twenty-first century. It is written in the fabulist mode made famous by Aesop where, as Lypp states “[t]he comic element is essential in order to bring across the moral point” (1995, p. 184). Howitt's poem opens: ““Will you walk into my parlour?” said a spider to a fly? / “’Tis the prettiest little parlour that ever you did spy”” (p. 49). In Howitt's text the fly is initially suspicious of the pseudo-polite interaction set up by the spider. On his invitation to “take a slice” of cake (p. 50) she responds: “kind sir that cannot be, / I’ve heard what’s in your pantry, and I do not wish to see” (pp. 50-1). Eventually, however, she succumbs to the spider's flattery:

Alas, alas! how very soon this silly little Fly,
Hearing his wily, flattering words, came slowly flitting by;
[...]Up jumped the cunning Spider, and fiercely held her fast.
He dragged her up his winding stair, into his dismal den.
Within his little parlour — but she ne'er came out again! (p. 52)

In Howitt's text any possibility of differing interpretations of the poem by the child reader are closed down through the necessity of proving the moral point. The philosopher Georg Hegel observes just this issue in his discussion of Aesop and the fabulist mode in his *Aesthetics* (collected 1835). He speaks of the concept of the fable as a rather limited kind of wit with the outcome of the story entirely inevitable: the fly has to succumb to the spider so that the moral point can be proven. Hegel states that

in Aesop's famous fables, the author “dare not speak his teaching openly, and can only make it intelligible in a kind of riddle which is at the same time always being solved” (Hegel qtd. in Patterson, 1991, p. 14). Thus the idea of humour and play in Howitt's verse is essentially a charade - a ‘merry lie’ of pedagogy couched in play. The poem maintains a ludic tone, but it leaves little room for interpretation from its child readers.

In Maunder's text the poem opens in a similar way to Howitt's verse with the spider stating: “dear Fly, come and see where, for you, / I have wove a fine web spangled over with dew” (p. 71). However here, the poem is more open and the fly is wilier. Realising that the spider's “nice silken net” is anything but “pleasant”, he humorously responds to the spider in the same faux-polite, double-voiced manner:

[...] ‘no;
I cannot well go:
But I'll ask of friend TROUT, if I find his at leisure.
As he understands nets, if they yield any pleasure’, (p. 72)

He then goes to the trout who also tries to entice him into his lair by asking him for a “kiss” for his “birth-day” (p. 72) to which the fly in a similar comic echo, replies:

[...] ‘No!
I dare not do so,
For the last FLY you kiss'd, being clumsy, no doubt,
Fell into your mouth and could never get out.’

A snake overhears him and also attempts to entice the fly closer - a ruse the Fly immediately sees through, and leaving the three creatures still plotting to kill him, flies to John the footman whom he wakes from his sleep on the riverbank by tickling his nose. With John thrashing madly at the fly with a spade, the insect leads him to his would-be assassins where John, “giving the water a dash with a spade, / The SNAKE

cut in half was - the SPIDER was drown'd - /And the TROUT on the grass died with many a bound.” (p.74). The tale ends with Fly victorious, stating in the same repetitive structure:

[...] ‘Oho!
And ends it all so!
I’d weep for my friends and be quite out of spirits,
But I think that one tear would o’erpay all their merits,’ (p. 75).

Like Witbook, the fly is here a kind of anti-hero whom the reader of the poem is encouraged to champion throughout the narrative. Evading the sort of inevitable ending offered by Howitt’s poem, here the Fly, is a clever trickster who escapes temptation and outwits his more powerful tormentors, turning his status of victim into victor. In this respect the Fly is a forerunner to the mouse in Julia Donaldson and Axel Shaffer’s *The Gruffalo* (1999). Indeed, although Donaldson states that the stimulus for her story comes from an old Chinese tale of a girl outwitting a tiger⁷⁹, the parallels between the stories written almost two hundred years apart are evident. The unknown *Whims and Oddities for the Young* illustrates both the importance of humour to children’s literature in the early nineteenth century and reinforces the dynamism of the “genealogy of affiliations” around which this thesis is based. Texts such as ‘The Fly, The Spider, The Snake and the Trout’ underscore the importance of this era in the cultural trajectory of children’s literature and confirm that their humour, even at a remove of two hundred years, can speak to the familiar comic texts of today’s children.

Of course. *Whims and Oddities for the Young* is just one example of numerous humorous juvenile texts of this period that all in their own way have contributed to

⁷⁹ See *The Guardian online*, 2004 – an interview with Julia Donaldson

my narrative. John Harris' *The History of Sixteen Wonderful Old Women*, for example, was published in 1820 and its innovatory verse structure launched the limerick form made so famous by Edward Lear. John Marshall followed up with Richard Scafton Sharpe's *Anecdotes and Adventures of Fifteen Gentlemen* in 1821, whilst Jane and Ann Taylor's *Signor Topsy-Turvy's Wonderful Magic Lantern; or, The World Turned Upside Down* (1810) illustrates a carnivalesque inverting of hierarchies that connects to the papillonnades, and which also influenced Lewis Carroll's upside-down world in the Alice books⁸⁰. And there were so many others: *The Dandies' Ball* and *The Dandies' Wedding* (1819 and 1820) were also published by Marshall and it was these texts that were held up as examples of the malign influence of satire on children in *The London Magazine*. The little known publisher John Aldis presented *The Old Man, His Son and His Ass and All the Adventures that came to Pass* to his child readers in 1810 along with several other amusing tales, and A. K. Newman and Dean and Munday published many texts that foregrounded laughter and entertainment. *The Gaping, Wide Mouthed Waddling Frog* (1823) was an additive, rhyming game along the lines of the *House That Jack Built*, whilst *Deborah Dent and Her Donkey* (1823) is just one of many comic 'Dame' stories written in a similar mode to the Hubbard texts, that also included *The Remarkable Adventures of an Old Woman and Her Pig* (1810) and *Dame Wiggins of Lee and her Seven Wonderful Cats* (1823). These texts underline the fact that my own work is just a beginning; there is still much valuable scholarship to be done on humour for children in this early nineteenth-century period. Aside from the woefully under researched area of the juvenile Christmas annuals, further analysis on the lesser-

⁸⁰ See Reichertz, 2000 for a full explanation of the influence of this book and other carnivalesque tales on Carroll's work.

known publishers of the era - such as Samuel Maunders, J. L. Marks, Edward Wallis and others - would add considerably to critical scholarship. To 'reassemble' these publishers' works for children and research their connections and motivations in a literary and commercial sense would further extend the canon of literature available to children in this era and would also begin to change the landscape of the publishing community, extending scholarship beyond Tabart, Harris and the Dartons. Finally, there is considerable scope to research and analyse the illustrators of children's books in the context of their work in book illustration for an adult audience and their involvement in other types of art such as caricature and/or fine art. Maidment's work on amiable humour in the visual mode could be complemented and extended by a study of the work for a juvenile audience of many of the artists he mentions and who also appear in this thesis - Henry and William Heath for example, as well as J. L. Marks, T. H. Brookes and William Mulready. All of these artists made a considerable contribution to the children's book publishing industry alongside better known figures such as George Cruikshank and Thomas Bewick. As such, work in this area could further highlight the "genealogy of affiliations" in terms of visual as well as textual humour for children.

My thesis has shown not only the prevalence of comic texts for children in this period but also the breadth of humour employed in these works and how, through humour, the child is intimately connected to prevailing debates concerning the uses and the suitability of humour for young people. Close analysis of the texts in my study reveals a complex web of associations and the centrality of humour to the presentation of the child in this period. Humorous texts can ridicule and/or share genial laughter with their readers. They can control and punish, set the reader free or undermine them. Comic texts can be conservative or operate within a radical sphere,

belong to a low frame of reference or a high one. They can be intellectual or visceral and sometimes both at the same time. Humour can transverse class boundaries and sometimes reinforce them. As Rosen states “amusement and entertainment are serious matters” and thus deserve a central position in the scholarship of early nineteenth-century children’s literature.

Word Count: 86,881

Note on the Bibliography: Due to the large number of anonymously authored and undated texts in my thesis I have placed all primary texts (those from which I have quoted or to which I have referred) under the chapter heading in which they first appear. For similar reasons, I have placed secondary sources from periodicals, newspapers, letters and websites in chapter specific listings after the primary texts. Other secondary sources appear after these entries, with collections, archives and databases completing the bibliography.

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